M. W. Talmer

MARZIO'S CRUCIFIX

"His eyes fixed themselves upon the smooth tonsure."—Chapter VII.

Marzio's Crucifix

BY

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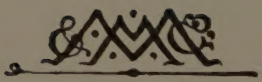
MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S ST., LONDON
1909



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TORONTO

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F. MARION CRAWFORD
1887

First Edition printed 1887, *2 vols., Globe 8vo.*
Second Edition 1 vol., Crown 8vo, 1888.
Reprinted 1889, 1890, 1891, 1894, 1900.
Published in Macmillan's 7d. Series, 1909.

MARZIO'S CRUCIFIX

CHAPTER I

"THE whole of this modern fabric of existence is a living lie!" cried Marzio Pandolfi, striking his little hammer upon the heavy table with an impatient rap. Then he dropped it and turning on his stool rested one elbow upon the board while he clasped his long, nervous fingers together and stared hard at his handsome apprentice. Gianbattista Bordogni looked up from his work without relinquishing his tools, nodded gravely, stared up at the high window, and then went on hammering gently upon his little chisel, guiding the point carefully among the delicate arabesques traced upon the silver.

"Yes," he said quietly, after a few seconds, "it is all a lie. But what do you expect, Maestro Marzio? You might as well talk to a stone wall as preach liberty to these cowards."

"Nevertheless, there are some—there are half a

dozen——" muttered Marzio, relapsing into sullen discontent and slowly turning the body of the chalice beneath the cord stretched by the pedal on which he pressed his foot. Having brought under his hand a round boss which was to become the head of a cherub under his chisel, he rubbed his fingers over the smooth silver, mechanically, while he contemplated the red wax model before him. Then there was silence for a space, broken only by the quick, irregular striking of the two little hammers upon the heads of the chisels.

Maestro Marzio Pandolfi was a skilled workman and an artist. He was one of the last of those workers in metals who once sent their masterpieces from Rome to the great cathedrals of the world; one of the last of the artistic descendants of Caradosso, of Benvenuto Cellini, of Claude Ballin, and of all their successors; one of those men of rare talent who unite the imagination of the artist with the executive skill of the practised workman. They are hard to find nowadays. Of all the twenty chisellers of various ages who hammered from morning till night in the rooms outside, one only—Gianbattista Bordogni—had been thought worthy by his master to share the privacy of the inner studio. The lad had talent, said Maestro Marzio, and, what was more, the lad had ideas—ideas about life, about the future of Italy, about the future of

the world's society. Marzio found in him a pupil, an artist and a follower of his own political creed.

It was a small room in which they worked together. Plain wooden shelves lined two of the walls from the floor to the ceiling. The third was occupied by tables and a door, and in the fourth high grated windows were situated, from which the clear light fell upon the long bench before which the two men sat upon high stools. Upon the shelves were numerous models in red wax, of chalices, monstrances, marvellous ewers and embossed basins for the ablution of the priests' hands, crucifixes, crowns, palm and olive branches—in a word, models of all those things which pertain to the service and decoration of the church, and upon which it has been the privilege of the silversmith to expend his art and labour from time immemorial until the present day. There were some few casts in plaster, but almost all were of that deep red, strong-smelling wax which is the most fit medium for the temporary expression and study of very fine and intricate designs. There is something in the very colour which, to one acquainted with the art, suggests beautiful fancies. It is the red of the Pompeian walls, and the rich tint seems to call up the matchless traceries of the ancients. Old chisellers say that no one can model anything wholly bad in red wax, and there is truth in the saying. The material

is old—the older the better; it has passed under the hand of the artist again and again; it has taken form, served for the model of a lasting work, been kneaded together in a lump, been worked over and over by the box-wood tool. The workman feels that it has absorbed some of the qualities of the master's genius, and touches it with the certainty that its stiff substance will yield new forms of beauty in his fingers, rendering up some of its latent capacity of shape at each pressure and twist of the deftly-handled instrument.

At the extremities of the long bench huge iron vices were fixed by staples that ran into the ground. In one of these was fastened the long curved tool which serves to beat out the bosses of hollow and small-necked vessels. Each of the workmen had a pedal beneath his foot from which a soft cord ascended, passed through the table, and pressed the round object on which he was working upon a thick leather cushion, enabling him to hold it tightly in its place, or by lifting his foot to turn it to a new position. In pots full of sand were stuck hundreds of tiny chisels, so that the workmen could select at a glance the exact form of tool needful for the moment. Two or three half balls of heavy stone stood in leathern collars, their flat surfaces upwards and covered with a brown composition of pitch and beeswax an inch thick, in

which small pieces of silver were firmly embedded in position to be chiselled.

The workshop was pervaded by a smell of wax and pitch, mingled with the curious undefinable odour exhaled from steel tools in constant use, and supplemented by the fumes of Marzio's pipe. The red bricks in the portion of the floor where the two men sat were rubbed into hollows, but the dust had been allowed to accumulate freely in the rest of the room, and the dark corners were full of cobwebs which had all the air of being inhabited by spiders of formidable dimensions.

Marzio Pandolfi, who bent over his work and busily plied his little hammer during the interval of silence which followed his apprentice's last remark, was the sole owner and master of the establishment. He was forty years of age, thin and dark. His black hair was turning grey at the temples, and though not long, hung forward over his knitted eyebrows in disorderly locks. He had a strange face. His head, broad enough at the level of the eyes, rose to a high prominence towards the back, while his forehead, which projected forward at the heavy brows, sloped backwards in the direction of the summit. The large black eyes were deep and hollow, and there were broad rings of dark colour around them, so that they seemed strangely thrown into relief above the sunken, colourless cheeks.

Marzio's nose was long and pointed, very straight, and descending so suddenly from the forehead as to make an angle with the latter the reverse of the one most common in human faces. Seen in profile, the brows formed the most prominent point, and the line of the head ran back above, while the line of the nose fell inward from the perpendicular down to the small curved nostrils. The short black moustache was thick enough to hide the lips, though deep furrows surrounded the mouth and terminated in a very prominent but pointed chin. The whole face expressed unusual qualities and defects; the gifts of the artist, the tenacity of the workman and the small astuteness of the plebeian were mingled with an appearance of something which was not precisely ideality, but which might easily be fanaticism.

Marzio was tall and very thin. His limbs seemed to move rather by the impulse of a nervous current within than by any development of normal force in the muscles, and his long and slender fingers, naturally yellow and discoloured by the use of tools and the handling of cements, might have been parts of a machine, for they had none of that look of humanity which one seeks in the hand, and by which one instinctively judges the character. He was dressed in a woollen blouse, which hung in odd folds about his emaciated frame, but which betrayed the

roundness of his shoulders, and the extreme length of his arms. His apprentice, Gianbattista Bordogni, wore the same costume; but beyond his clothing he bore no trace of any resemblance to his master. He was not a bad type of the young Roman of his class at five-and-twenty years of age. His thick black hair curled all over his head, from his low forehead to the back of his neck, and his head was of a good shape, full and round, broad over the brows and high above the orifice of the ear. His eyes were brown and not over large, but well set, and his nose was slightly aquiline, while his delicate black moustache showed the pleasant curve of his even lips. There was colour in his cheeks, too—that rich colour which dark men sometimes have in their youth. He was of middle height, strong and compactly built, with large, well-made hands that seemed to have more power in them, if less subtle skill, than those of Maestro Marzio.

"Remember what I told you about the second indentation of the acanthus," said the elder workman, without looking round; "a light, light hand—no holes in this work!"

Gianbattista murmured a sort of assent, which showed that the warning was not wanted. He was intent upon the delicate operation he was performing. Again the hammers beat irregularly.

"The more I think of it," said Marzio after the

pause, "the more I am beside myself. To think that you and I should be nailed to our stools here, week-days and feast-days, to finish a piece of work for a scoundrelly priest——"

"A cardinal," suggested Gianbattista.

"Well! What difference is there? He is a priest, I suppose—a creature who dresses himself up like a pulcinella before his altar—to——"

"Softly!" ejaculated the young man, looking round to see whether the door was closed.

"Why softly?" asked the other angrily, though his annoyance did not seem to communicate itself to the chisel he held in his hand, and which continued its work as delicately as though its master were humming a pastoral. "Why softly? An apoplexy on your softness! The papers speak as loudly as they please—why should I hold my tongue? A dog-butcher of a priest!"

"Well," answered Gianbattista in a meditative tone, as he selected another chisel, "he has the money to pay for what he orders. If he had not, we would not work for him, I suppose."

"If we had the money, you mean," retorted Marzio. "Why the devil should he have money rather than we? Why don't you answer? Why should he wear silk stockings—red silk stockings, the animal? Why should he want a silver ewer and basin to wash his hands at his mass? Why would

not an earthen one do as well, such as I use? Why don't you answer? Eh?"

"Why should Prince Borghese live in a palace and keep scores of horses?" inquired the young man calmly.

"Ay—why should he? Is there any known reason why he should? Am I not a man as well as he? Are you not a man—you young donkey? I hate to think that we, who are artists, who can work when we are put to it, have to slave for such fellows as that—mumbling priests, bloated princes, a pack of fools who are incapable of an idea! An idea! What am I saying? Who have not the common intelligence of a cabbage-seller in the street! And look at the work we give them—the creation of our minds, the labour of our hands——"

"They give us their money in return," observed Gianbattista. "The ancients, whom you are so fond of talking about, used to get their work done by slaves chained to the bench——"

"Yes. And it has taken us two thousand years to get to the point we have reached! Two thousand years—and what is it? Are we any better than slaves, except that we work better?"

"I doubt whether we work better."

"What is the matter with you this morning?" cried Marzio. "Have you been sneaking into some church on your way here? Pah! You smell of the

sacristy! Has Paolo been here? Oh, to think that a brother of mine should be a priest! It is not to be believed!"

"It is the irony of fate. Moreover, he gets you plenty of orders."

"Yes, and no doubt he takes his percentage on the price. He had a new cloak last month, and he asked me to make him a pair of silver buckles for his shoes. Pretty, that—an artist's brother with silver buckles! I told him to go to the devil, his father, for his ornaments. Why does he not steal an old pair from the cardinal, his bondmaster? Not good enough, I suppose—beast!"

Marzio laid aside his hammer and chisel, and lit the earthen pipe with the rough wooden stem that lay beside him. Then he examined the beautiful head of the angel he had been making upon the body of the ewer. He touched it lovingly, loosed the cord, and lifted the piece from the pad, turning it towards the light and searching critically for any defect in the modelling of the little face. He replaced it on the table, and selecting a very fine-pointed punch, laid down his pipe for a moment and set about putting the tiny pupils into the eyes. Two touches were enough. He began smoking again, and contemplated what he had done. It was the body of a large silver ewer of which Gianbattista was ornamenting the neck and mouth, which were of a separate piece. Amongst

the intricate arabesques little angels' heads were embossed, and on one side a group of cherubs was bearing a "monstrance" with the sacred Host through silver clouds. A hackneyed subject on church vessels, but which had taken wonderful beauty under the skilled fingers of the artist, who sat cursing the priest who was to use it, while expending his best talents on its perfections.

"It is not bad," he said rather doubtfully. "Come and look at it, Tista," he added. The young man left his place and came and bent over his master's shoulder, examining the piece with admiration. It was characteristic of Marzio that he asked his apprentice's opinion. He was an artist, and had the chief peculiarities of artists—namely, diffidence concerning what he had done, and impatience of the criticism of others, together with a strong desire to show his work as soon as it was presentable.

"It is a masterpiece!" exclaimed Gianbattista. "What detail! I shall never be able to finish anything like that cherub's face!"

"Do you think it is as good as the one I made last year, Tista?"

"Better," returned the young man confidently. "It is the best you have ever made. I am quite sure of it. You should always work when you are in a bad humour; you are so successful!"

"Bad humour! I am always in a bad humour,"

grumbled Marzio, rising and walking about the brick floor, while he puffed clouds of acrid smoke from his coarse pipe. "There is enough in this world to keep a man in a bad humour all his life."

"I might say that," answered Gianbattista, turning round on his stool and watching his master's angular movements as he rapidly paced the room. "I might abuse fate—but you! You are rich, married, a father, a great artist!"

"What stuff!" interrupted Marzio, standing still with his long legs apart, and folding his arms as he spoke through his teeth, between which he still held his pipe. "Rich? Yes—able to have a good coat for feast-days, meat when I want it, and my brother's company when I don't want it—for a luxury, you know! Able to take my wife to Frascati on the last Thursday of October as a great holiday. My wife, too! A creature of beads and saints and little books with crosses on them—who would leer at a friar through the grating of a confessional, and who makes the house hideous with her howling if I choose to eat a bit of pork on a Friday! A good wife indeed! A jewel of a wife, and an apoplexy on all such jewels! A nice wife, who has a face like a head from a tombstone in the Campo Varano for her husband, and who has brought up her daughter to believe that her father is condemned to everlasting flames because he hates cod-fish—salt

cod-fish soaked in water! A wife who sticks images in the lining of my hat to convert me, and sprinkles holy water on me when she thinks I am asleep, but I caught her at that the other night—— "

"Indeed, they say the devil does not like holy water," remarked Gianbattista, laughing.

"And you want to marry my daughter, you young fool," continued Marzio, not heeding the interruption. "You do. I will tell you what she is like. My daughter—yes!—she has fine eyes, but she has the tongue of the —— "

"Of her father," suggested Gianbattista, suddenly frowning.

"Yes—of her father, without her father's sense," cried Marzio, angrily. "With her eyes, those fine eyes!—those eyes!—you want to marry her. If you wish to take her away, you may, and good riddance. I want no daughter; there are too many women in the world already. They and the priests do all the harm between them, because the priests know how to think too well, and women never think at all. I wish you good luck of your marriage and of your wife. If you were my son you would never have thought of getting married. The mere idea of it made you send your chisel through a cherub's eye last week and cost an hour's time for repairing. Is that the way to look at the great question of humanity? Ah! if I were only a deputy in the

Chambers, I would teach you the philosophy of all that rubbish!"

"I thought you said the other day that you would not have any deputies at all," observed the apprentice, playing with his hammer.

"Such as these are—no! A few of them I would put into the acid bath, as I would a casting, to clean them before chiselling them down. They might be good for something then. You must begin by knocking down, boy, if you want to build up. You must knock down everything, raze the existing system to the ground, and upon the place where it stood shall rise the mighty temple of immortal liberty."

"And who will buy your chalices and monstrances under the new order of things?" inquired Gianbattista coldly.

"The foreign market," returned Marzio. "Italy shall be herself again, as she was in the days of Michael Angelo; of Leonardo, who died in the arms of a king; of Cellini, who shot a prince from the walls of Saint Angelo. Italy shall be great, shall monopolise the trade, the art, the greatness of all creation!"

"A lucrative monopoly!" exclaimed the young man.

"Monopolies! There shall be no monopolies! The free artisan shall sell what he can make and

buy what he pleases. The priests shall be turned out in chain gangs and build roads for our convenience, and the superfluous females shall all be deported to the glorious colony of Massowah! If I could but be absolute master of this country for a week I could do much."

"I have no doubt of it," answered Gianbattista, with a quiet smile.

"I should think not," assented Marzio proudly; then catching sight of the expression on the young man's face, he turned sharply upon him. "You are mocking me, you good-for-nothing!" he cried angrily. "You are laughing at me, at your master, you villain, you wretch, you sickly hound, you priest-ridden worm! It is intolerable! It is the first time you have ever dared; do you think I am going to allow you to think for yourself after all the pains I have taken to educate you, to teach you my art, you ungrateful reptile?"

"If you were not such a great artist I would have left you long ago," answered the apprentice. "Besides, I believe in your principles. It is your expression of them that makes me laugh now and then; I think you go too far sometimes!"

"As if any one had ever gone far enough!" exclaimed Marzio, somewhat pacified, for his moods were very quick. "Since there are still men who are richer than others, it is a sign that we have

not gone to the end—to the great end in which we believe. I am sure you believe in it too, Tista, don't you?"

"Oh yes—in the end—certainly. Do not let us quarrel about the means, Maestro Marzio. I must do another leaf before dinner."

"I will get in another cherub's nose," said his master, preparing to relight his pipe for a whiff before going to work again. "Body of a dog, these priests!" he grumbled, as he attacked the next angel on the ewer with matchless dexterity and steadiness. A long pause followed the animated discourse of the chiseller. Both men were intent upon their work, alternately holding their breath for the delicate strokes, and breathing more freely as the chisel reached the end of each tiny curve.

"I think you said a little while ago that I might marry Lucia," observed Gianbattista, without looking up, "that is, if I would take her away!"

"And if you take her away," retorted the other, "where will you get bread?"

"Where I get it now. I could live somewhere else and come here to work; it seems simple enough."

"It seems simple, but it is not," replied Marzio. "Perhaps you could try and get Paolo's commissions away from me, and then set up a studio for yourself; but I doubt whether you could succeed.

I am not old yet, nor blind, nor shaky, thank God!"

"I did not catch the last words," said Gianbattista, hiding his smile over his work.

"I said I was not old, nor broken down yet, thanks to my strength," growled the chiseller; "you will not steal my commissions yet awhile. What is the matter with you to-day? You find fault with half I say, and the other half you do not hear at all. You seem to have lost your head, Tista. Be steady over those acanthus leaves; everybody thinks an acanthus leaf is the easiest thing in the world, whereas it is one of the most difficult before you get to figures. Most chisellers seem to copy their acanthus leaves from the cabbage in their soup. They work as though they had never seen the plant growing. When the Greeks began to carve Corinthian capitals, they must have worked from real leaves, as I taught you to model when you were a boy. Few things are harder than a good acanthus leaf."

"I should think women could do the delicate part of our work very well," said the apprentice, returning to the subject from which Marzio was evidently trying to lead him. "Lucia has such very clever fingers."

"Idiot!" muttered Marzio between his teeth, not deigning to make any further answer.

The distant boom of a gun broke upon the silence

that followed, and immediately the bells of all the neighbouring churches rang out in quick succession. It was midday.

"I did not expect to finish that nose," said Marzio, rising from his stool. He was a punctual man, who exacted punctuality in others, and in spite of his thin frame and nervous ways, he loved his dinner. In five minutes all the men had left the workshop, and Marzio and his apprentice stood in the street, the former locking the heavy door with a lettered padlock, while the younger man sniffed the fresh spring air that blew from the west out of the square of San Carlo a Catenari down the Via dei Falegnami in which the establishment of the silver-chiseller was situated.

As Marzio fumbled with the fastenings of the door, two women came up and stopped. Marzio had his back turned, and Gianbattista touched his hat in silence. The younger of the two was a stout, black-haired woman of eight-and-thirty years, dressed in a costume of dark green cloth, which fitted very closely to her exuberantly-developed bust, and was somewhat too elaborately trimmed with imitation of jet and black ribands. A high bonnet, decorated with a bunch of purple glass grapes and dark green leaves, surmounted the lady's massive head, and though carefully put on and neatly tied, seemed too small for the wearer. Her ears were adorned by long gold

earrings, in each of which were three large garnets, and these trinkets dangled outside and over the riband of the bonnet, which passed under her chin. In her large hands, covered with tight black gloves, she carried a dark red parasol and a somewhat shabby little black leather bag with steel fastenings. The stout lady's face was of the type common among the Roman women of the lower class—very broad and heavy, of a creamy white complexion, the upper lip shaded by a dark fringe of down, and the deep sleepy eyes surmounted by heavy straight eyebrows. Her hair, brought forward from under her bonnet, made smooth waves upon her low forehead and reappeared in thick coils at the back of her neck. Her nose was relatively small, but too thick and broad at the nostrils, although it departed but little from the straight line of the classic model. Altogether the Signora Pandolfi, christened Maria Luisa, and wife to Marzio the silver-chiseller, was a portly and pompous-looking person, who wore an air of knowing her position, and of being sure to maintain it. Nevertheless, there was a kindly expression in her fat face, and if her eyes looked sleepy they did not look dishonest.

Signora Pandolfi's companion was her old maid-of-all-work, Assunta, commonly called Suntarella, without whom she rarely stirred abroad—a little old woman, in neat but dingy-coloured garments, with

a grey woollen shawl drawn over her head like a cowl, instead of a bonnet.

Marzio finished fastening the door, and then turned round. On seeing his wife he remained silent for a moment, looking at her with an expression of dissatisfied inquiry. He had not expected her.

"Well?" he ejaculated at last.

"It is dinner-time," remarked the stout lady.

"Yes, I heard the gun," answered Marzio drily. "It is the same as if you had told me," he added ironically, as he turned and led the way across the street.

"A pretty answer!" exclaimed Maria Luisa, tossing her large head as she followed her lord and master to the door of their house. Meanwhile Assunta, the old servant, glanced at Gianbattista, rolled up her eyes with an air of resignation, and spread out her withered hands for a moment with a gesture of despair, instantly drawing them in again beneath the folds of her grey woollen shawl.

"Gadding!" muttered Marzio, as he entered the narrow door from which the dark steps led abruptly upwards. "Gadding—always gadding! And who minds the soup-kettle when you are gadding, I should like to know? The cat, I suppose! Oh, these women and their priests! These priests and these women!"

"Lucia is minding the soup-kettle," gasped Maria

Luisa, as she puffed upstairs behind her thin and active husband.

"Lucia!" cried Marzio angrily, a flight of steps higher. "I suppose you will bring her up to be woman of all work? Well, she could earn her living then, which is more than you do! After all, it is better to mind a soup-kettle than to thump a piano and to squeal so that I can hear her in the shop opposite, and it is better than hanging about the church all the morning, or listening to Paolo's drivelling talk. By all means keep her in the kitchen."

It was hard to say whether Signora Pandolfi was puffing or sighing as she paused for breath upon the landing, but there was probably something of both in the labour of her lungs. She was used to Marzio. She had lived with him for twenty years, and she knew his moods and his ways, and detected the coming storm from afar. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, for her, there was little variety in the sequence of his ideas. She was accustomed to his beginning at the grumbling stage before dinner, and proceeding by a crescendo movement to the pitch of rage, which was rarely reached until he had finished his meal, when he generally seized his hat and dragged Gianbattista away with him, declaring loudly that women were not fit for human society. The daily excitement of this comedy had long lost its

power to elicit anything more than a sigh from the stout Maria Luisa, who generally bore Marzio's unreasonable anger with considerable equanimity, waiting for his departure to eat her boiled beef and salad in peace with Lucia, while old Assunta sat by the table with the cat in her lap, putting in a word of commiseration alternately with a word of gossip about the lodgers on the other side of the landing. The latter were a young and happy pair: the husband, a chorus singer at the Apollo, who worked at glove cleaning during the day time; his wife, a sempstress, who did repairs upon the costumes of the theatre. Their apartments consisted of two rooms and a kitchen, while Marzio and his family occupied the rest of the floor, and entered their lodging by the opposite door.

Maria Luisa envied the couple in her sleepy fashion. Her husband was indeed comparatively rich, and though economical in his domestic arrangements, he had money in the bank enough to keep him comfortably for the rest of his days. His violence did not extend beyond words and black looks, and he was not miserly about a few francs for dress, or a dinner at the Falcone two or three times a year. But in the matter of domestic peace his conduct left much to be desired. He was a sober man, but his hours were irregular, for he attended the meetings of a certain club which Maria Luisa

eld in abhorrence, and brought back opinions which nade her cross herself with her fat fingers, shudder- ng at the things he said. As for Gianbattista Bordogni, who lived with them, and consequently eceived most of his wages in the shape of board nd lodging, he loved Lucia Pandolfi, his master's aughter, and though he shared Marzio's opinions, e held his tongue in the house. He understood how ecessary to him the mother's sympathy must be, nd, with subtle intelligence, he knew how to create contrast between himself and his master by being eticent at the right moment.

Lucia opened the door in answer to the bell her ather had rung, and stood aside in the narrow way o let members of the household pass by, one by ne. Lucia was seventeen years old, and probably esembled her mother as the latter had looked at ne same age. She was slight, and tall, and dark, ith a quantity of glossy black hair coiled behind er head. Her black eyes had not yet acquired that leepy look which advancing life and stoutness had ut into her mother's, as a sort of sign of the diffi- ulty of quick motion. Her figure was lithe, though ne was not a very active girl, and one might have redicted that at forty she, too, would pay her debt o time in pounds of flesh. There are thin people ho look as though they could never grow stout, nd there are others whose leisurely motion and de-

liberate step foretells increase of weight. But Gianbattista had not studied these matters of physiological horoscopy. It sufficed him that Lucia Pandolfi was at present a very pretty girl, even beautiful, according to some standards. Her thick hair, low forehead, straight classic features, and severe mouth fascinated the handsome apprentice, and the intimacy which had developed between the two during the years of his residence under Marzio's roof, from the time when Lucia was a little girl to the present day, had rendered the transition from friendship to love almost imperceptible to them both. Gianbattista was the last of the party to enter the lodging, and as he paused to shut the door, Lucia was still lingering at the threshold.

"Hist! They will see!" she protested under her breath.

"What do I care!" whispered the apprentice, as he kissed her cheek in the dusky passage. Then they followed the rest.

CHAPTER II

THAT evening Marzio finished the last cherub's head on the ewer before he left the shop. He had sent Gianbattista home, and had dismissed the men who were working at a huge gilded grating ordered by a Roman prince for a church he was decorating. Marzio worked on by the light of a strong lamp until the features were all finished and he had indicated the pupils of the eyes with the fine-pointed punch. Then he sat some time at his bench with the beautiful piece of workmanship under his fingers, looking hard at it and straining his eyes to find imperfections that did not exist. At last he laid it down tenderly upon the stuffed leather pad and stared at the green shade of the lamp, deep in thought.

The man's nature was in eternal conflict with itself, and he felt as though he were the battle-ground of forces he could neither understand nor control. A true artist in feeling, in the profound cultivation of his tastes, in the laborious patience with which he executed his designs, there was an element in his

character and mind which was in direct contradiction with the essence of what art is. If art can be said to depend upon anything except itself, that something is religion. The arts began in religious surroundings, in treating religious subjects, and the history of the world from the time of the early Egyptians has shown that where genius has lost faith in the supernatural, its efforts to produce great works of lasting beauty in the sensual and material atmosphere of another century have produced comparatively insignificant results. The science of silver-chiselling began, so far as this age is concerned, in the church. The tastes of Francis the First directed the attention of the masters of the art to the making of ornaments for his mistresses, and for a time the men who had made chalices for the Vatican succeeded in making jewelry for Madame de Chateaubriand, Madame d'Etampes, and Diane de Poitiers. But the art itself remained in the church, and the marvels of *repoussé* gold and silver to be seen in the church of Notre Dame des Victoires, the masterpieces of Ossani of Rome, could not have been produced by any goldsmith who made jewelry for a living.

Marzio Pandolfi knew all this better than any one, and he could no more have separated himself from his passion for making chalices and crucifixes than he could have changed the height of his stature

or the colour of his eyes. But at the same time he hated the church, the priests, and every one who was to use the beautiful things over which he spent so much time and labour. Had he been indifferent, a careless, good-natured sceptic, he would have been a bad artist. As it was, the very violence of his hatred lent spirit and vigour to his eye and hand. He was willing to work upon the figure, perfecting every detail of expression, until he fancied he could feel and see the silver limbs of the dead Christ suffering upon the cross under the diabolical skill of his long fingers. The monstrous horror of the thought made him work-marvels, and the fancied realisation of an idea that would startle even a hardened unbeliever, lent a feverish impulse to this strange man's genius.

As for the angels on the chalices, he did not hate them; on the contrary, he saw in them the reflection of those vague images of loveliness and innocence which haunt every artist's soul at times, and the mere manual skill necessary to produce expression in things so minute, fascinated a mind accustomed to cope with difficulties, and so inured to them as almost to love them.

Nevertheless, when a man is constantly a prey to strong emotions, his nature cannot long remain unchanged. The conviction had been growing in Marzio's mind that it was his duty, for the sake of

consistency, to abandon his trade. The thought saddened him, but the conclusion seemed inevitable. It was absurd, he repeated to himself, that one who hated the priests should work for them. Marzio was a fanatic in his theories, but he had something of the artist's simplicity in his idea of the way they should be carried out. He would have thought it no harm to kill a priest, but it seemed to him contemptible to receive a priest's money for providing the church with vessels which were to serve in a worship he despised.

Moreover, he was not poor. Indeed, he was richer than any one knew, and the large sums paid for his matchless work went straight from the workshop to the bank, while Marzio continued to live in the simple lodgings to which he had first brought home his wife, eighteen years before, when he was but a young partner in the establishment he now owned. As he sat at the bench, looking from his silver ewer to the green lamp-shade, he was asking himself whether he should not give up this life of working for people he hated and launch into that larger work of political agitation, for which he fancied himself so well fitted. He looked forward into an imaginary future, and saw himself declaiming in the Chambers against all that existed, rousing the passions of a multitude to acts of destruction—of justice, as he called it in his thoughts—and

leading a vast army of angry men up the steps of the Capitol to proclaim himself the champion of the rights of man against the rights of kings. His eyelids contracted and the concentrated light of his eyes was reduced to two tiny bright specks in the midst of the pupils; his nervous hand went out and the fingers clutched the jaws of the iron vice beside him as he would have wished to grapple with the jaws of the beast oppression, which in his dreams seemed ever tormenting the poor world in which he lived.

There was something lacking in his face, even in that moment of secret rage as he sat alone in his workroom before the lamp. There was the frenzy of the fanatic, the exaltation of the dreamer, clearly expressed upon his features, but there was something wanting. There was everything there except the force to accomplish, the initiative which oversteps the bank of words, threats, and angry thoughts, and plunges boldly into the stream, ready to sacrifice itself to lead others. The look of power, of stern determination, which is never absent from the faces of men who change their times, was not visible in the thin dark countenance of the silver-chiseller. Marzio was destined never to rise above the common howling mob which he aspired to lead.

This fact asserted itself outwardly as he sat there. After a few minutes the features relaxed, a smile that was almost weak—the smile that shows that

a man lacks absolute confidence—passed quickly over his face, the light in his eyes went out, and he rose from his stool with a short, dissatisfied sigh, which was repeated once or twice as he put away his work and arranged his tools. He made the rounds of the workshop, looked to the fastenings of the windows, lighted a taper, and then extinguished the lamp. He threw a loose overcoat over his shoulders without passing his arms through the sleeves, and went out into the street. Glancing up at the windows of his house opposite, he saw that the lights were burning brightly, and he guessed that his wife and daughter were waiting for him before sitting down to supper.

"Let them wait," he muttered with a surly grin, as he put out the taper and went down the street in the opposite direction.

He turned the street corner by the dark Palazzo Antici Mattei, and threaded the narrow streets towards the Pantheon and the Piazzi Sant' Eustachio. The weather had changed, and the damp south-east wind was blowing fiercely behind him. The pavement was wet and slippery with the strange thin coating of greasy mud which sometimes appears suddenly in Rome even when it has not rained. The insufficient gas lamps flickered in the wind as though they would go out, and the few pedestrians who hurried along clung closely to the wall as though it

offered them some protection from the moist scirocco. The great doors of the palaces were most of them closed, but here and there a little red light announced a wine-shop, and as Marzio passed by he could see through the dirty panes of glass dark figures sitting in a murky atmosphere over bottles of coarse wine. The streets were foul with the nauseous smell of decaying vegetables and damp walls which the south-east wind brings out of the older parts of Rome, and while few voices were heard in the thick air, the clatter of horses' hoofs on the wet stones rattled loudly from the thoroughfares which lead to the theatres. It was a dismal night, but Marzio Pandolfi felt that his temper was in tune with the weather as he tramped along towards the Pantheon.

The streets widened as he neared his destination, and he drew his overcoat more closely about his neck. Presently he reached a small door close to Sant' Eustachio, one of the several entrances to the ancient Falcone, an inn which has existed for centuries upon the same spot, in the same house, and which affords a rather singular variety of accommodation. Down stairs, upon the square, is a modern restaurant with plate-glass windows, marble floor, Vienna cane chairs, and a general appearance of luxury. A flight of steps leads to an upper story, where there are numerous rooms of every shape and

dimension, furnished with old-fashioned Italian simplicity, though with considerable cleanliness. Thither resort the large companies of regular guests who have eaten their meals there during most of their lives. But there is much more room in the house than appears. The vast kitchen on the ground floor terminates in a large space, heavily vaulted and lighted by oil lamps, where rougher tables are set and spread, and where you may see the well-to-do wine-carter eating his supper after his journey across the Campagna, in company with some of his city acquaintances of a similar class. In dark corners huge wine-casks present their round dusty faces to the doubtful light, the smell of the kitchen pervades everything, tempered by the smell of wine from the neighbouring cellars; the floor is of rough stone worn by generations of cooks, potboys, and guests. Beyond this again a short flight of steps leads to a narrow doorway, passing through which one enters the last and most retired chamber of the huge inn. Here there is barely room for a dozen persons, and when all the places are full the bottles and dishes are passed from the door by the guests themselves over each other's heads, for there is no room to move about in the narrow space. The walls are whitewashed and the tables are as plain as the chairs, but the food and drink that are consumed there are the best that the house affords, and the

society, from the point of view of Marzio Pandolfi and his friends, is of the most agreeable.

The chiseller took his favourite seat in the corner furthest from the window. Two or three men of widely different types were already at the table, and Marzio exchanged a friendly nod with each. One was a florid man of large proportions, dressed in the height of the fashion and with scrupulous neatness. He was a jeweller. Another, a lawyer with a keen and anxious face, wore a tightly-buttoned frock coat and a black tie. Immense starched cuffs covered his bony hands and part of his fingers. He was supping on a salad into which he from time to time poured an additional dose of vinegar. A third man, with a round hat on one side of his head, and who wore a very light-coloured overcoat, displaying a purple scarf with a showy pin at the neck, held a newspaper in one hand and a fork in the other, with which he slowly ate mouthfuls of a ragout of wild boar. He was a journalist on the staff of an advanced radical paper.

"Halloa, Sor Marzio!" cried this last guest, suddenly looking up from the sheet he was reading, "here is news of your brother."

"What?" asked Marzio briefly, but as though the matter were utterly indifferent to him. "Has he killed anybody, the assassin?" The journalist laughed hoarsely at the jest.

"Not so bad as that," he answered. "He is getting advancement. They are going to make him a canon of Santa Maria Maggiore. It is in the *Osservatore Romano* of this evening."

"He is good for nothing else," growled Marzio. "It is just like him not to have told me anything about it."

"With the sympathy which exists between you, I am surprised," said the journalist. "After all, you might convert him, and then he would be useful. He will be an archdeacon next, and then a bishop—who knows?—perhaps a cardinal!"

"You might as well talk of converting the horses on Monte Cavallo as of making Paolo change his mind," replied Pandolfi, beginning to sip the white wine he had ordered. "You don't know him—he is an angel, my brother! Oh, quite an angel! I wish somebody would send him to heaven, where he is so anxious to be!"

"Look out, Marzio!" exclaimed the lawyer, glancing from the vinegar cruet towards the door and then at his friend.

"No such luck," returned the chiseller. "Nothing ever happens to those black-birds. When we get as far as hanging them, my dear brother will happen to be in Paris instead of in Rome. You might as well try to catch a street cat by calling to it *micio, micio!* as try and catch a priest. You may as well expect to

kill a mule by kicking it as one of those animals. Burn the Vatican over their heads and think you have destroyed them like a wasps' nest, they will write you a letter from Berlin the next day saying that they are alive and well, and that Prince Bismarck protests against your proceedings."

"Bravo, Sor Marzio!" cried the journalist. "I will put that in the paper to-morrow—it is a fine fulmination. You always refresh my ideas—why will you not write an article for us in that strain? I will publish it as coming from a priest who has given up his orders, married, and opened a wine-shop in Naples. What an effect! Magnificent! Do go on!"

Marzio did not need a second invitation to proceed upon his favourite topic. He was soon launched, and as the little room filled, his pale and sunken cheeks grew red with excitement, his tongue was unloosed, and he poured out a continuous stream of blasphemous ribaldry such as would have shocked the ears of a revolutionist of the year '89 or of a *pétroleuse* of the nineteenth century. It seemed as though the spring once opened would never dry. His eyes flashed, his fingers writhed convulsively on the table, and his voice rang out, ironical and cutting, with strange intonations that roused strange feelings in his hearers. It was the old subject, but he found something new to say upon it at each meeting with

his friends, and they wondered where he got the imagination to construct his telling phrases and specious, virulent arguments.

We have all wondered at such men. They are the outcome of this age and of no previous time, as it is also to be hoped that their like may not arise hereafter. They are found everywhere, these agitators, with their excited faces, their nervous utterances, and their furious hatred of all that is. They find their way into the parliaments of the world, into the dining-rooms of the rich, into the wine-shops of the working men, into the Press even, and some of their works are published by great houses and read by great ladies, if not by great men. Suddenly, when we least expect it, a flaming advertisement announces a fiery tirade against all that the great mass of mankind hold in honour, if not in reverence. Curiosity drives thousands to read what is an insult to humanity, and even though the many are disgusted, some few are found to admire a rhetoric which exalts their own ignorance to the right of judging God. And still the few increase and grow to be a root and send out shoots and creepers like an evil plant, so that grave men say among themselves that if there is to be a universal war in our times or hereafter it will be fought by Christians of all denominations defending themselves against those who are not Christians.

Marzio sat long at his table, and his modest pint of wine was enough to moisten his throat throughout the time during which he held forth. When the liquor was finished he rose, took down his overcoat from the peg on which it hung, pushed his soft hat over his eyes, and with a sort of triumphant wave of the hand, saluted his friends and left the room. He was a perfectly sober man, and no power would have induced him to overstep the narrow limit he allowed to his taste. Indeed, he did not care for wine itself, and still less for any excitement it produced in his brain. He ordered his half-litre as a matter of respect for the house, as he called it, and it served to wet his throat while he was talking. Water would have done as well. Consumed by the intensity of his hatred for the things he attacked, he needed no stimulant to increase his exaltation.

When he was gone, there was silence in the room for some few minutes. Then the journalist burst into a loud laugh.

"If we only had half a dozen fellows like that in the Chambers, all talking at once!" he cried.

"They would be kicked into the middle of Montecitorio in a quarter of an hour," answered the thin voice of the lawyer. "Our friend Marzio is slightly mad, but he is a good fellow in theory. In practice that sort of thing must be dropped into public life a little at a time, as one drops vinegar into a salad,

on each leaf. If you don't, all the vinegar goes to the bottom together, and smells horribly sour."

While Marzio was holding forth to his friends, the family circle in the Via dei Falegnami was enjoying a very pleasant evening in his absence. The Signora Pandolfi presided at supper in a costume which lacked elegance, but ensured comfort—the traditional skirt and white cotton jacket of the Italian housewife. Lucia wore the same kind of dress, but with less direful effects upon her appearance. Gianbattista, as usual after working hours, was arrayed in clothes of fashionable cut, aiming at a distinct imitation of the imaginary but traditional English tourist. A murderous collar supported his round young chin, and a very stiffly-constructed pasteboard-lined tie was adorned by an exquisite silver pin of his own workmanship—the only artistic thing about him.

Besides these members of the family, there was a fourth person at supper, the person whom, of all others, Marzio detested, Paolo Pandolfi, his brother the priest, commonly called Don Paolo. He deserves a word of description, for there was in his face a fleeting resemblance to Marzio, which might easily have led a stranger to believe that there was a similarity between their characters. Tall, like his brother, the priest was a little less thin, and evidently far less nervous. The expression of his face was

thoughtful, and the deep, heavily-ringed eyes were like Marzio's, but the forehead was broader, and the breadth ascended higher in the skull, which was clearly defined by the short, closely-cropped hair and the smooth tonsure at the back. The nose was larger and of more noble shape, and Paolo's complexion was less yellow than his brother's; the features were not surrounded by furrows or lines, and the leanness of the priest's face threw them into relief. The clean shaven upper lip showed a kind and quiet mouth, which smiled easily and betrayed a sense of humour, but was entirely free from any suggestion of cruelty. Don Paolo was scrupulous of his appearance, and his cassock and mantle were carefully brushed, and his white collar was immaculately clean. His hands were of the student type—white, square at the tips, lean, and somewhat knotty.

Marzio, in his ill-humour, had no doubt flattered himself that his family would wait for him for supper. But his family had studied him and knew his ways. When he was not punctual, he seldom came at all, and a quarter of an hour was considered sufficient to decide the matter.

"What are we waiting to do?" exclaimed Maria Luisa, in the odd Italian idiom. "Marzio is in his humours—he must have gone to his friends. Ah! those friends of his!" she sighed. "Let us sit down to supper," she added; and, from her tone, the idea

of supper seemed to console her for her husband's absence.

"Perhaps he guessed that I was coming," remarked Don Paolo, with a smile. "In that case he will be a little nervous with me when he comes back. With your leave, Maria Luisa," he added, by way of announcing that he would say grace. He gave the short Latin benediction, during which Gianbattista never looked away from Lucia's face. The boy fancied she was never so beautiful as when she stood with her hands folded and her eyes cast down.

"Marzio does not know what I have come for," began Don Paolo again, as they all sat down to the square table in the little room. "If he knew, perhaps he might have been here—though perhaps he would not care very much after all. You all ask what it is? Yes; I will tell you. His Eminence has obtained for me the canonry that was vacant at Santa Maria Maggiore——"

At this announcement everybody sprang up and embraced Don Paolo, and overwhelmed him with congratulations, reproaching him at the same time for having kept the news so long to himself.

"Of course, I shall continue to work with the Cardinal," said the priest, when the family gave him time to speak. "But it is a great honour. I have other news for Marzio——"

"I imagine that you did not count upon the canonry as a means of pleasing him," remarked the Signora Pandolfi, with a smile.

"No, indeed," laughed Lucia. "Poor papa—he would rather see you sent to be a curate in Cività Lavinia!"

"Dear me! I fear so," answered Don Paolo, with a shade of sadness. "But I have a commission for him. The Cardinal has ordered another crucifix, which he desires should be Marzio's masterpiece—silver, of course, and large. It must be altogether the finest thing he has ever made, when it is finished."

"I daresay he will be very much pleased," said Maria Luisa, smiling comfortably.

"I wish he could make the figure solid, cast and chiselled, instead of *repoussé*," remarked Gianbattista, whose powerful hands craved heavy work by instinct.

"It would be a pity to waste so much silver; and besides, the effects are never so light," said Lucia, who, like most artists' daughters, knew something of her father's work.

"What is a little silver, more or less, to the Cardinal?" asked Gianbattista, with a little scorn; but as he met the priest's eye his expression instantly became grave.

The apprentice was very young; he was not

beyond that age at which, to certain natures, it seems a fine thing to be numbered among such men as Marzio's friends. But at the same time he was not old enough, nor independent enough, to exhibit his feelings on all occasions. Don Paolo exercised a dominant influence in the Pandolfi household. He had the advantage of being calm, grave, and thoroughly in earnest, not easily ruffled nor roused to anger, any more than he was easily hurt. By character sensitive, he bore all small attacks upon himself with the equanimity of a man who believes his cause to be above the need of defence against little enemies. The result was that he dominated his brother's family, and even Marzio himself was not free from a certain subjection which he felt, and which was one of the most bitter elements in his existence. Don Paolo imposed respect by his quiet dignity, while Marzio asserted himself by speaking loudly and working himself voluntarily into a state of half-assumed anger. In the contest between quiet force and noisy self-assertion the issue is never doubtful. Marzio lacked real power, and he felt it. He could command attention among the circle of his associates who already sympathised with his views, but in the presence of Paolo he was conscious of struggling against a superior and incomprehensible obstacle, against the cool and unresentful disapprobation of a man stronger than himself. It was many

years since he had ventured to talk before his brother as he talked when he was alone with Gianbattista, and the latter saw the change that came over his master's manner before the priest, and guessed that Marzio was morally afraid. The somewhat scornful allusion to the Cardinal's supposed wealth certainly did not constitute an attack upon Don Paolo, but Gianbattista nevertheless felt that he had said something rather foolish and made haste to ignore his words. The influence could not be escaped.

It was this subtle power that Marzio resented, for he saw that it was exerted continually, both upon himself and the members of his household. The chiseller acknowledged to himself that in a great emergency his wife, his daughter, and even Gianbattista Bordogni, would most likely follow the advice of Don Paolo, in spite of his own protests and arguments to the contrary. He fancied that he himself alone was a free agent. He doubted Gianbattista, and began to think that the boy's character would turn out a failure. This was the reason why he no longer encouraged the idea of a marriage between his daughter and his apprentice, a scheme which, somewhat earlier, had been freely discussed. It had seemed an admirable arrangement. The young man promised to turn out a freethinker after Marzio's own heart, and showed a talent for his profession which left nothing to be desired. Some

one must be ready to take Marzio's place in the direction of the establishment, and no one could be better fitted to undertake the task than Gianbattista. Lucia would inherit her father's money as the capital for the business, and her husband should inherit the workshop with all the stock-in-trade. Latterly, however, Marzio had changed his mind, and the idea no longer seemed so satisfactory to him as at first. Gianbattista was evidently falling under the influence of Don Paolo, and that was a sufficient reason for breaking off the match. Marzio hardly realised that as far as his outward deportment in the presence of the priest was concerned, the apprentice was only following his master's example.

Marzio had been looking about him for another husband for his daughter, and he had actually selected one from among his most intimate friends. His choice had fallen upon the thin lawyer—by name Gasparo Carnesecchi—who, according to the chiseller's views, was in all respects a most excellent match. A true freethinker, a practising lawyer with a considerable acquaintance in the world of politics, a discreet man not far from forty years of age, it seemed as though nothing more were required to make a model husband. Marzio knew very well that Lucia's dowry would alone have sufficed to decide the lawyer to marry her, and an interview with Carnesecchi had almost decided the matter.

Of course, he had not been able to allude to the affair this evening at the inn, when so many others were present, but the preliminaries were nearly settled, and Marzio had made up his mind to announce his intention to his family at once. He knew well enough what a storm he would raise, and, like many men who are always trying to seem stronger than they really are, he had determined to choose a moment for making the disclosure when he should be in a thoroughly bad humour. As he walked homewards from the old inn he felt that this moment had arrived. The slimy pavement, the moist wind driving through the streets and round every corner, penetrating to the very joints, contributed to make him feel thoroughly vicious and disagreeable; and the tirade in which he had been indulging before his audience of friends had loosed his tongue, until he was conscious of being able to face any domestic disturbance or opposition.

The little party had adjourned from supper, and had been sitting for some time in the small room which served as a place of meeting. Gianbattista was smoking a cigarette, which he judged to be more in keeping with his appearance than a pipe when he was dressed in civilised garments, and he was drawing an elaborate ornament of arabesques upon a broad sheet of paper fixed on a board. Lucia seated at the table was watching the work, while Don Paolo

sat in a straight-backed chair, his white hands folded on his knee, from time to time addressing a remark to Maria Luisa. The latter, being too stout to recline in the deep easy-chair near the empty fireplace, sat bolt upright, with her feet upon the edge of a footstool, which was covered by a tapestry of worsted-work, displaying an impossible nosegay upon a vivid green ground.

They had discussed the priest's canonry, and the order for the crucifix. They had talked about the weather. They had made some remarks upon Marzio's probable disposition of mind when he should come home, and the conversation was exhausted so far as the two older members were concerned. Gianbattista and Lucia conversed in a low tone, in short, enigmatic phrases.

"Do you know?" said the apprentice.

"What?" inquired Lucia.

"I have spoken of it to-day." Both glanced at the Signora Pandolfi. She was sitting up as straight as ever, but her heavy head was slowly bending forward.

"Well?" asked the young girl.

"He was in a diabolical humour. He said I might take you away." Gianbattista smiled as he spoke, and looked into Lucia's eyes. She returned his gaze rather sadly, and only shook her head and shrugged her shoulders for a reply.

"If we took him at his word," suggested Gianbattista.

"Just so—it would be a fine affair!" exclaimed Lucia ironically.

"After all, he said so," argued the young man. "What does it matter whether he meant it?"

"Things are going badly for us," sighed his companion. "It was different a year ago. You must have done something to displease him, Tista. I wish I knew!" Her dark eyes suddenly assumed an angry expression, and she drew in her red lips.

"Wish you knew what?" inquired the apprentice, in a colder tone.

"Why he does not think about it as he used to. He never made any objections until lately. It was almost settled."

Gianbattista glanced significantly at Don Paolo, shrugged his shoulders, and went on drawing.

"What has that to do with it?" asked Lucia impatiently.

"It is enough for your father that it would please his brother. He would hate a dog that Don Paolo liked."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed the girl. "It is something else. Papa sees something—something that I do not see. He knows his own affairs, and perhaps he knows yours too, Tista. I have not forgotten the other evening."

"I!" ejaculated the young man, looking up angrily. "You know very well where I was—at the Circolo Artistico. How do you dare to think——"

"Why are you so angry if there is no one else in the case?" asked Lucia, with a sudden sweetness, which belied the jealous glitter in her eyes.

"It seems to me that I have a right to be angry. That you should suspect me after all these years! How many times have I sworn to you that I went nowhere else?"

"What is the use of your swearing? You do not believe in anything—why should you swear? Why should I believe you?"

"Oh—if you talk like that, I have finished!" answered Gianbattista. "But there—you are only teasing me. You believe me, just as I believe you. Besides, as for swearing and believing in something besides you—who knows? I love you—is not that enough?"

Lucia's eyes softened as they rested on the young man's face. She knew he loved her. She only wanted to be told so once more.

"There is Marzio," said Don Paolo, as a key rattled in the latch of the outer door.

"At this hour!" exclaimed the Signora Pandolfi, suddenly waking up and rubbing her eyes with her fat fingers.

CHAPTER III

MARZIO, having divested himself of his heavy coat and hat, appeared at the door of the sitting-room.

Everybody looked at him, as though to discern the signs of his temper, and no one was perceptibly reassured by the sight of his white face and frowning forehead.

"Well, most reverend canon," he began, addressing Don Paolo, "I am in time to congratulate you, it seems. It was natural that I should be the last to hear of your advancement, through the papers."

"Thank you," answered Don Paolo quietly. "I came to tell you the news."

"You are very considerate," returned Marzio. "I have news also; for you all." He paused a moment, as though to give greater effect to the statement he was about to make. "I refer," he continued very slowly, "to the question of Lucia's marriage."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the priest. "I am glad if it is to be arranged at last."

The other persons in the room held their breath.

The young girl blushed deeply under her white skin, and Gianbattista grew pale as he laid aside his pencil and shaded his eyes with his hands. The Signora Pandolfi panted with excitement and trembled visibly as she looked at her husband. His dark figure stood out strongly from the background of the shabby blue wall paper, and the petroleum lamp cast deep shadows in the hollows of his face.

"Yes," he continued, "I talked yesterday with Gasparo Carnesecchi—you know, he is the lawyer I always consult. He is a clever fellow and understands these matters. We talked of the contract; I thought it better to consult him, you see, and he thinks the affair can be arranged in a couple of weeks. He is so intelligent. A marvel of astuteness; we discussed the whole matter, I say, and it is to be concluded as soon as possible. So now, my children——"

Gianbattista and Lucia, seated side by side at the table, were looking into each other's eyes, and as Marzio fixed his gaze upon them, their hands joined upon the drawing-board, and an expression of happy surprise overspread their faces. Marzio smiled too, as he paused before completing the sentence.

"So that now, my children," he continued, speaking very slowly, "you may as well leave each other's hands and have done with all this nonsense."

The lovers looked up suddenly with a puzzled air, supposing that Marzio was jesting.

"I am in earnest," he went on. "You see, Tista, that it will not be proper for you to sit and hold Lucia's hand when she is called Signora Carnesecchi, so you may as well get used to it."

For a moment there was a dead silence in the room. Then Lucia and Gianbattista both sprang to their feet.

"What!" screamed the young girl in an agony of terror. "Carnesecchi! what do you mean?"

"*Infame!* Wretch!" shouted Gianbattista, beside himself with rage as he sprang forward to grasp Marzio in his hands.

But the priest had risen too, and placed himself between the young man and Marzio to prevent any struggle. "No violence!" he cried in a tone that dominated the angry voices and the hysterical weeping of Maria Luisa, who sat rocking herself in her chair. Gianbattista stepped back and leaned against the wall, choking with anger. Lucia fell back into her seat and covered her face with her hands.

"Violence? Who wants violence?" asked Marzio in contemptuous tones. "Do you suppose I am afraid of Tista? Let him alone, Paolo; let us see whether he will strike me."

The priest now turned his back on the apprentice, and confronted Marzio. He was not pale like the

rest, for he was not afraid of the chiseller, and the generous flush of a righteous indignation mounted to his calm face.

"You are mad," he said, meeting his brother's gaze fearlessly.

"Not in the least," returned Marzio. "Lucia shall marry Gasparo Carnesecchi at once, or she shall not marry any one; what am I saying? She shall have no choice. She must and she shall marry the man I have chosen. What have you to do with it? Have you come here to put yourself between me and my family? I advise you to be careful. The law protects me from such interference, and fellows of your cloth are not very popular at present."

"The law," answered the priest, controlling his wrath, "protects children against their parents. The law which you invoke provides that a father shall not force his daughter to marry against her will, and I believe that considerable penalties are incurred in such cases."

"What do you know of law, except how to elude it?" inquired Marzio defiantly.

Not half an hour had elapsed since he had been haranguing the admiring company of his friends, and his words came easily. Moreover, it was a long time since he had broken through the constraint he felt in Don Paolo's presence, and the opportunity having presented itself was not to be lost.

"Who are you that should teach me?" he repeated, raising his voice to a strained key and gesticulating fiercely. "You, your very existence is a lie, and you are the server of lies, and you and your fellow liars would have created them if they didn't already exist, you love them so. You live by a fraud, and you want to drag everybody into the comedy you play every day in your churches, everybody who is fool enough to drop a coin into your greedy palm! What right have you to talk to men? Do you work? Do you buy? Do you sell? You are worse than those fine gentlemen who do nothing because their fathers stole our money, for you live by stealing it yourselves! And you set yourselves up as judges over an honest man to tell him what he is to do with his daughter? You fool, you thing in petticoats, you deceiver of women, you charlatan, you mountebank, go! Go and perform your antics before your altars, and leave hard-working men like me to manage their families as they can, and to marry their daughters to whom they will!"

Marzio had rolled off his string of invective in such a tone, and so rapidly, that it had been impossible to interrupt him. The two women were sobbing bitterly. Gianbattista, pale and breathing hard, looked as though he would throttle Marzio if he could reach him, and Don Paolo faced the angry

artist, with reddening forehead, folding his arms and straining his muscles to control himself. When Marzio paused for breath, the priest answered him with an effort.

"You may insult me if it pleases you," he said, "it is nothing to me. I cannot prevent your uttering your senseless blasphemies. I speak to you of the matter in hand. I tell you simply that in treating these two, who love each other, as you are treating them, you are doing a thing unworthy of a man. Moreover, the law protects your daughter, and I will see that the law does its duty."

"Oh, to think that I should have such a monster for a husband," groaned the fat Signora Pandolfi, still rocking herself in her chair, and hardly able to speak through her sobs.

"You will do a bad day's work for yourself and your art when you try to separate us," said Gianbattista between his teeth.

Marzio laughed hoarsely, and turned his back on the rest, beginning to fill his pipe at the chimney-piece. Don Paolo heard the apprentice's words, and understood their meaning. He went and laid his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Do not let us have any threats, Tista," he said quietly. "Sor Marzio will never do this thing—believe me, he cannot if he would."

"Go on," cried Marzio, striking a match. "Go

on—sow the seeds of discord, teach them all to disobey me. I am listening, my dear Paolo."

"All the better, if you are," answered the priest, "for I assure you I am in earnest. You will have time to consider this thing. I have a matter of business with you, Marzio. That is what I came for this evening. If you have done, we will speak of it."

"Business?" exclaimed Marzio in loud ironical tones. "This is a good time for talking of business—as good as any other! What is it?"

"The Cardinal wants another piece of work done, a very fine piece of work."

"The Cardinal? I will not make any more chalices for your cardinals. I am sick of chalices, and monstrances, and such stuff."

"It is none of those," answered Don Paolo quietly. "The Cardinal wants a magnificent silver crucifix. Will you undertake it? It must be your greatest work, if you do it at all."

"A crucifix?" repeated Marzio, in a changed tone. The angry gleam faded from his eyes, and a dreamy look came into them as he let the heavy lids droop a little, and remained silent, apparently lost in thought. The women ceased sobbing, and watched his altered face, while Gianbattista sank down into a chair and absently fingered the pencil that had fallen across the drawing-board.

"Will you do it?" asked Don Paolo, at last.

"A crucifix," mused the artist. "Yes, I will make a crucifix. I have made many, but I have never made one to my mind. Yes, tell the Cardinal that I will make it for him, if he will give me time."

"I do not think he will need it in less than three or four months," answered Don Paolo.

"Four months—that is not a long time for such a work. But I will try."

Thereupon Marzio, whose manner had completely changed, puffed at his pipe until it burned freely, and then approached the table, glancing at Gianbattista and Lucia as though nothing had happened. He drew the drawing-board which the apprentice had been using towards him, and, taking the pencil from the hand of the young man, began sketching heads on one corner of the paper.

Don Paolo looked at him gravely. After the words Marzio had spoken, it had gone against the priest's nature to communicate to him the commission for the sacred object. He had hesitated a moment, asking himself whether it was right that such a man should be allowed to do such work. Then the urgency of the situation, and his knowledge of his brother's character, had told him that the diversion might avert some worse catastrophe, and he had quickly made up his mind. Even now he asked himself whether he had done right. It was

a question of theology, which it would have taken long to analyse, and Don Paolo had other matters to think of in the present, so he dismissed it from his mind. He wanted to be gone, and he only stayed a few minutes to see whether Marzio's mind would change again. He knew his brother well, and he was sure that no violence was to be feared from him, except in his speech. Such scenes as he had just witnessed were not uncommon in the Pandolfi household, and Don Paolo did not believe that any consequence was to be expected after he had left the house. He only felt that Marzio had been more than usually unreasonable, and that the artist could not possibly mean seriously what he had proposed that evening.

The priest did not indeed think that Gianbattista was altogether good enough for Lucia. The boy was occasionally a little wild in his speech, and though he was too much in awe of Don Paolo to repeat before him any of the opinions he had learned from his master, his manner showed occasionally that he was inclined to take the side of the latter in most questions that arose. But the habit of controlling his feelings in order not to offend the man of the church, and especially in order not to hurt Lucia's sensitive nature, had begun gradually to change and modify the young man's character. From having been a devoted admirer of Marzio's

political creed and extreme free thought Gianbattista had fallen into the way of asking questions of the chiseller, to see how he would answer them; and the answers had not always satisfied him. Side by side with his increasing skill in his art, which led him to compare himself with his teacher, there had grown up in the apprentice the habit of comparing himself with Marzio from the intellectual point of view as well as from the artistic. The comparison did not appear to him advantageous to the elder man, as he discovered, in his way of thinking, a lack of logic on the one hand, and a love of frantic exaggeration on the other, which tended to throw a doubt upon the whole system of ideas which had produced these defects. The result was that the young man's mental position was unbalanced, and he was inclined to return to a more normal condition of thought. Don Paolo did not know all this, but he saw that Gianbattista had grown more quiet during the last year, and he hoped that his marriage with Lucia would complete the change. To see her thrown into the arms of a man like Gasparo Carnesecchi was more than the priest's affection for his niece could bear. He hardly believed that Marzio would seriously think again of the scheme, and he entertained a hope that the subject would not even be broached for some time to come.

Marzio continued to draw in silence, and after a

few minutes Don Paolo rose to take his leave. The chiseller did not look up from his pencil.

"Good-night, Marzio—let it be a good piece of work," said Paolo.

"Good-night," growled the artist, his eyes still fixed on the paper. His brother saluted the rest and left the room to go home to his lonely lodgings at the top of an old palace, in the first floor of which dwelt the Cardinal, whom he served as secretary. When he was gone, Lucia rose silently and went to her room, leaving her father and mother with Gianbattista. The Signora Pandolfi hesitated as to whether she should follow her daughter or stay with the two men. Her woman's nature feared further trouble, and visions of drawn knives rose before her swollen eyes, so that, after making as though she would rise twice, she finally remained in her seat, her fat hands resting idly upon her knees, staring at her husband and Gianbattista. The latter sat gloomily watching the paper on which his master was drawing.

"Marzio, you do not mean it?" said Maria Luisa, after a long interval of silence. The good woman did not possess the gift of tact.

"Do you not see that I have an idea?" asked her husband crossly, by way of an answer, as he bent his head over his work.

"I beg your pardon," said the Signora Pandolfi,

in a humble tone, looking piteously at Gianbattista. The apprentice shook his head, as though he meant that nothing could be done for the present. Then she rose slowly, and with a word of good-night as she turned to the door, she left the room. The two men were alone.

"Now that nobody hears us, Sor Marzio, what do you mean to do?" asked Gianbattista in a low voice. Marzio shrugged his shoulders.

"What I told you," he answered, after a few seconds. "Do you suppose that rascally priest of a brother has made me change my mind?"

"No, I did not expect that, but I am not a priest; nor am I a boy to be turned round your fingers and put off in this way—sent to the wash like dirty linen. You must answer to me for what you said this evening."

"Oh, I will answer as much as you please," replied the artist, with an evil smile.

"Very well. Why do you want to turn me out, after promising for years that I should marry Lucia with your full consent when she was old enough?"

"Why? because you have turned yourself out, to begin with. Secondly, because Carnesecchi is a better match for my daughter than a beggarly chiseller. Thirdly, because I please; and fourthly, because I do not care a fig whether you like it or not. Are those reasons sufficient or not?"

"They may satisfy you," answered Gianbattista. "They leave something to be desired in the way of logic, in my humble opinion."

"Since I have told you that I do not care for your opinion——"

"I will probably find means to make you care for it," retorted the young man. "Don Paolo is quite right, in the first place, when he tells you that the thing is simply impossible. Fathers do not compel their daughters to marry in this century. Will you do me the favour to explain your first remark a little more clearly? You said I had turned myself out—how?"

"You have changed, Tista," said Marzio, leaning back to sharpen his pencil, and staring at the wall. "You change every day. You are not at all what you used to be, and you know it. You are going back to the priests. You fawn on my brother like a dog."

"You are joking," answered the apprentice. "Of course I would not want to make trouble in your house by quarrelling with Don Paolo, even if I disliked him. I do not dislike him. This evening he showed that he is a much better man than you."

"Dear Gianbattista," returned Marzio in sour tones, "every word you say convinces me that I have done right. Besides, I am busy—you see—you disturb my ideas. If you do not like my house, you

can leave it. I will not keep you. I daresay I can educate another artist before I die. You are really only fit to swing a censer behind Paolo, or at the heels of some such animal."

"Perhaps it would be better to do that than to serve the mass you sing over your work-bench every day," said Gianbattista. "You are going too far, Sor Marzio. One may trifle with women and their feelings. You had better not attempt it with men."

"Such as you and Paolo? There was once a mule in the Pescheria Vecchia; when he got half-way through he did not like the smell of the fish, and he said to his leader, 'I will turn back.' The driver pulled him along. Then said the mule, 'Do not trifle with me. I will turn round and kick you.' But there is not room for a mule to turn round in the Pescheria Vecchia. The mule found it out, and followed the man through the fish market after all. I hope that is clear? It means that you are a fool."

"What is the use of bandying words?" cried the apprentice angrily. "I will offer you a bargain, Sor Marzio. I will give you your choice. Either I will leave the house, and in that case I will carry off Lucia and marry her in spite of you. Or else I will stay here—but if Lucia marries any one else I will cut your throat. Is that a fair bargain?"

"Perfectly fair, though I cannot see wherein the bargain consists," answered Marzio, with a rough

laugh. "I prefer that you should stay here. I will run the risk of being murdered by you, any day, and you may run the risk of being sent to the galleys for life, if you choose. You will be well cared for there, and you can try your chisel on paving-stones for a change from silver chalices."

"Never mind what becomes of me afterwards, in that case," said the young man. "If Lucia is married to some one else, I do not care what happens. So you have got your warning!"

"Thank you. If you had remained what you used to be, you might have married her without further difficulty. But to have you and Lucia and Maria Luisa and Paolo all conspiring against me from morning till night is more than I can bear. Good-night, and the devil be with you, you fool!"

"*Et cum spiritu tuo,*" answered Gianbattista as he left the room.

When Marzio was alone he returned to the head he was drawing—a head of wonderful beauty, inclined downwards and towards one side, bearing a crown of thorns, the eyelids drooped and shaded in death. He glanced at it with a bitter smile and threw aside the pencil without making another stroke upon the paper.

He leaned back, lighted another pipe, and began to reflect upon the events of the evening. He was glad it was over, for a strange weakness in his

violent nature made it hard for him to face such scenes unless he were thoroughly roused. Now, however, he was satisfied. For a long time he had seen with growing distrust the change in Gianbattista's manner, and in the last words he had spoken to the apprentice he had uttered what was really in his heart. He was afraid of being altogether overwhelmed by the majority against him in his own house. He hated Paolo with his whole soul, and he had hated him all his life. This calm, obliging brother of his stood between him and all peace of mind. It was not the least of his grievances that he received most of his commissions through the priest who was constantly in relation with the cardinal and rich prelates who were the patrons of his art. The sense of obligation which he felt was often almost unbearable, and he longed to throw it off. The man, whom he hated for his own sake and despised for his connection with the church, was daily in his house; at every turn he met with Paolo's tacit disapprobation or outspoken reticence. For a long time Paolo had doubted whether the marriage between the two young people would turn out well, and while he expressed his doubts Marzio had remained stubborn in his determination. Latterly, and doubtless owing to the change in Gianbattista's character, Paolo had always spoken of the marriage with favour. This sufficed at first to rouse Marzio's

suspicions, and ultimately led to his opposing with all his might what he had so long and so vigorously defended; he resolved to be done with what he considered a sort of slavery, and at one stroke to free himself from his brother's influence, and to assure Lucia's future. During several weeks he had planned the scene which had taken place that evening, waiting for his opportunity, trying to make sure of being strong enough to make it effective, and revolving the probable answers he might expect from the different persons concerned. It had come, and he was satisfied with the result.

Marzio Pandolfi's intelligence lacked logic. In its place he possessed furious enthusiasm, an exaggerated estimate of the value of his social doctrines, and a whole vocabulary of terms by which to describe the ideal state after which he hankered. But though he did not possess a logic of his own, his life was itself the logical result of the circumstances he had created. As, in the diagram called the parallelogram of forces, various conflicting powers are seen to act at a point, producing an inevitable resultant in a fixed line, so in the plan of Marzio's life, a number of different tendencies all acted at a centre, in his over-strained intelligence, and continued to push him in a direction he had not expected to follow, and of which even now he was far from expecting the ultimate termination.

He had never loved his brother, but he had loved his wife with all his heart. He had begun to love Lucia when she was a child. He had felt a sort of admiring fondness for Gianbattista Bordogni, and a decided pride in the progress and the talent of the apprentice. By degrees, as the prime mover, his hatred of Paolo gained force, it had absorbed his affection for Maria Luisa, who, after eighteen years of irreproachable wifehood, seemed to Marzio to be nothing better than an accomplice and a spy of his brother's in the domestic warfare. Next, the lingering love for his child had been eaten up in the same way, and Marzio said to himself that the girl had joined the enemy, and was no longer worthy of his confidence. Lastly, the change in Gianbattista's character and ideas seemed to destroy the last link which bound the chiseller to his family. Henceforth, his hand was against each one of his household, and he fancied that they were all banded together against himself.

Every step had followed as the inevitable consequence of what had gone before. The brooding and suspicious nature of the artist had persisted in seeing in each change in himself the blackest treachery in those who surrounded him. His wife was an implacable enemy, his daughter a spy, his apprentice a traitor, and for Paolo himself, Marzio considered him the blackest of villains. For all this chain of

hatreds led backwards, and was concentrated with ten-fold virulence in his great hatred for his brother. Paolo, in his estimation, was the author of all the evil, the sole ultimate cause of domestic discord, the arch enemy of the future, the representative, in Marzio's sweeping condemnation, not only of the church and of religion, but of that whole fabric of existing society which the chiseller longed to tear down.

Marzio's socialism, for so he called it, had one good feature. It was sincere of its kind, and disinterested. He was not of the common herd, a lazy vagabond, incapable of continuous work, or of perseverance in any productive occupation, desiring only to be enriched by impoverishing others, one of the endless rank and file of Italian republicans, to whom the word "republic" means nothing but bread without work, and the liberty which consists in howling blasphemies by day and night in the public streets. His position was as different from that of a private in the blackguard battalion as his artistic gifts and his industry were superior to those of the throng. He had money, he had talent, and he had been very successful in his occupation. He had nothing to gain by the revolutions he dreamed of, and he might lose much by any upsetting of the existing laws of property. He was, therefore, perfectly sincere, so far as his convictions went, and disinterested to a

remarkable degree. These conditions are often found in the social position of the true fanatic, who is the more ready to run to the greatest length, because he entertains no desire to better his own state. Marzio's real weakness lay in the limited scope of his views, and in a certain timid prudence which destroyed his power of initiative. He was an economical man, who distrusted the future; and though such a disposition produces a good effect in causing a man to save money against the day of misfortune, it is incompatible with the career of the true enthusiast, who must be ready to risk everything at any moment. The man who would move other men, and begin great changes, must have an enormous belief in himself, an unbounded confidence in his cause, and a large faith in the future, amounting to the absolute scorn of consequence.

These greater qualities Marzio did not possess, and through lack of them the stupendous results of which he was fond of talking had diminished to a series of domestic quarrels, in which he was not always victorious. His hatred of the church was practically reduced to the detestation of his brother, and to an unreasoning jealousy of his brother's influence in his home. His horror of social distinctions, which speculated freely upon the destruction of the monarchy, amounted in practice to nothing more offensive than a somewhat studious rudeness towards

the few strangers of high position who from time to time visited the workshop in the Via dei Falegnami. In the back room of his inn, Marzio could find loud and cutting words in which to denounce the Government, the monarchy, the church, and the superiority of the aristocracy. In real fact, Marzio took off his hat when he met the king in the street, paid his taxes with a laudable regularity, and increased the small fortune he had saved by selling sacred vessels to the priests against whom he inveighed. Instead of burning the Vatican and hanging the College of Cardinals to the pillars of the Colonnade, Marzio Pandolfi felt a very unpleasant sense of constraint in the presence of the only priest with whom he ever conversed, his brother Paolo. When, on very rare occasions, he broke out into angry invective, and ventured to heap abuse upon the calm individual who excited his wrath, he soon experienced the countershock in the shape of a strong conviction that he had injured his position rather than bettered it, and the melancholy conclusion forced itself upon him that by abusing Paolo he himself lost influence in his own house, and not unfrequently called forth the contempt of those he had sought to terrify.

The position was galling in the extreme; for, like many artists who are really remarkable in their profession, Marzio was very vain of his intellectual superiority in other branches. It may be a question

whether vanity is not essential to any one who is forced to compete in excellence with other gifted men. Vanity means emptiness, and in the case of the artist it means that emptiness which craves to be filled with praise. The artist may doubt his own work, but he is bitterly disappointed if other people doubt it also. Marzio had his full share of this kind of vanity, which, as in most cases, extended beyond the sphere of his art. How often does one hear two or three painters or sculptors who are gathered together in a studio, laying down the law concerning Government, society, and the distribution of wealth? And yet, though they make excellent statues and paint wonderful pictures, there are very few instances on record of artists having borne any important part in the political history of their times. Not from any want of a desire to do so, in many cases, but from the real want of the power; and yet many of them believe themselves far more able to solve political and social questions than the men who represent them in the Parliament of their country, or the persons who by innate superiority of tact have made themselves the arbiters of society.

Marzio's vanity suffered terribly, for he realised the wide difference that existed between his aims and the result actually produced. For this reason he had determined to bring matters to a point of contention in his household, in order to assert once and for all

the despotic authority which he believed to be his right. He knew well enough that in proposing the marriage of Lucia with Carnesecchi, he had hit upon a plan which Paolo would oppose with all his might. It seemed as though he could not have selected a question more certain to produce a hot contention. He had brought forward his proposal boldly, and had not hesitated to make a most virulent personal attack on his brother when the latter had shown signs of opposition. And yet, as he sat over his drawing-board, staring at the clouds of smoke that rose from his pipe, he was unpleasantly conscious that he had not been altogether victorious, that he had not played the part of the despot to the end, as he had intended to do, that he had suddenly felt his inferiority to Paolo's calmness, and that upon hearing of the proposition concerning the crucifix he had acted as though he had received a bribe to be quiet. He bit his thin lips as he reflected that all the family must have supposed his silence from that moment to have been the effect of the important commission which Paolo had communicated to him; for it seemed impossible that they should understand the current of his thoughts.

As he glanced at the head he had drawn he understood himself better than others had understood him, for he saw on the corner of the paper the masterly sketch of an ideal Christ he had sought after for

years without ever reaching it. He knew that that ideal had presented itself to his mind at the very moment when Paolo had proposed the work to him —the result, perhaps, of the excitement under which he laboured at the moment. From that instant he had been able to think of nothing. He had been impelled to draw, and the expression of his thought had driven everything else out of his mind. Paolo had gained a fancied victory by means of a fancied bribe. Marzio determined to revenge himself for the unfair advantage his brother had then taken, by showing himself inflexible in his resolution concerning the marriage. It was but a small satisfaction to have braved Gianbattista's boyish threats, after having seemed to accept the bribe of a priest.

CHAPTER IV

On the following morning Marzio left the house earlier than usual. Gianbattista had not finished his black coffee, and was not in a humour to make advances to his master, after the scene of the previous evening. So he did not move from the table when the chiseller left the room, nor did he make any remark upon the hour. The door that led to the stairs had hardly closed after Marzio, when Lucia put her head into the room where Gianbattista was seated.

"He is gone," said the young man; "come in, we can talk a few minutes."

"Tista," began Lucia, coming forward and laying her fingers on his curly hair, "what did all that mean last night? Have you understood?"

"Who understands that lunatic!" exclaimed Gianbattista, passing his arm round the girl's waist, and drawing her to him. "I only understand one thing, we must be married as soon as possible and be done with it. Is it not true, Lucia?"

"I hope so," answered his companion, with a blush and a sigh. "But I am so much afraid."

"Do not be afraid, leave it all to me, I will protect you, my darling," replied the young man, tapping his breast with the ready gesture of an Italian, as though to prove his courage.

"Oh, I am sure of that! But how can it be managed? Of course he cannot force me to marry Carnesecchi, as Uncle Paolo explained to him. But he will try, and he is so bad!"

"Let him try, let him try," repeated Gianbattista. "I made a bargain with him last night after you had gone to bed. Do you know what I told him? I told him that I would stay with him, but that if you married any one but me, I would cut his throat—Sor Marzio's throat, do you understand?"

"Oh, Tista!" cried Lucia. "How did you ever have the courage to tell him such a thing? Besides, you know, you would not do it, would you?"

"Do not trouble yourself, he saw I was in earnest, and he will think twice about it. Besides, he said yesterday that I might have you if I would take you away."

"A nice thing for a father to say of his daughter!" exclaimed the girl angrily. "And what did you answer him then, my love?"

"Oh! I said that I had not the slightest objection to the proceeding. And then he tried to prove to

me that we should starve without him, and then he swore at me like a Turk. What did it matter? He said I was changed. By Diana! Any man would change, just for the sake of not being like him!"

"How do you mean that you are changed, dear?" asked Lucia anxiously.

"Who knows? He said I fawned on Don Paolo like a dog, instead of hating the priests as I used to do. What do you think, love?"

"I think Uncle Paolo would laugh at the idea," answered the girl, smiling herself, but rather sadly. "I am afraid you are as bad as ever, in that way."

"I am not bad, Lucia. I begin to think I like Don Paolo. He was splendid last night. Did you see how he stared your father out of countenance, and then turned him into a lamb with the order for the crucifix? Don Paolo has a much stronger will than Sor Marzio, and a great deal more sense. He will make your father change his mind."

"Of course it would be for the better if we could be married without any objection, and I am very glad you are growing fond of Uncle Paolo. But I have seen it for some time. He is so good!"

"Yes. That is the truth," answered Gianbattista in meditative tone. "He is too good. It is not natural. And then he has a way of making me feel it. Now, I would have strangled Sor Marzio last

night if your uncle had not been there, but he prevented me. Of course he was right. Those people always are. But one hates to be set right by a priest. It is humiliating!"

"Well, it is better than not to be set right at all," said Lucia. "You see, if you had strangled poor papa, it would have been dreadful! Oh, Tista, promise me that you will not do anything violent! Of course, he is very unkind, I know. But it would be terrible if you were to be angry and hurt him. You will not, Tista? Tell me you will not?"

"We shall see; we shall see, my love!"

"You do not love me if you will not promise."

"Oh, if that is all, my love, I will promise never to lay a finger on him until you are actually married to some one else. But then——" Gianbattista made the gesture which means driving the knife into an enemy.

"Then you may do anything you please," answered Lucia, with a laugh. "He will never make me marry any one but you. You know that, my heart!"

"In that case we ought to be married very soon," argued the young man. "We need not live here, you know. Indeed, it would be out of the question. We will take one of those pretty little places in the new quarter——"

"That is so far away," interrupted the girl.

"Yes, but there is the tramway, and there are omnibuses. It only takes a quarter of an hour."

"But you would be so far from me all day, my love. I could not run into the studio at all hours, and you would not come home for dinner. Oh! I could not bear it!"

"Very well, we will try and find something near here," said Gianbattista, yielding the point. "We will get a little apartment near the Minerva, where there is sun."

"And we will have a terrace on the top of the house, with pots of carnations."

"And red curtains on rings, that we can draw; it is such a pretty light when the sun shines through them."

"And green wall paper with blue furniture," suggested Lucia. "It is so gay."

"Or perhaps the furniture of the same colour as the paper—you know they have it so in all fashionable houses."

"Well, if it is really the fashion, I suppose we must," assented the girl rather regretfully.

"Yes, it is the fashion, my heart, and you must have everything in the fashion. But I must be going," added the young man, rising from his seat.

"Already? It is early, Tista——" she hesitated. "Dear Tista," she began again, her dark eyes resting anxiously on his face, "what will you say to him

in the workshop? You will tell him that I would rather die than marry Carnesecchi, that we are solemnly promised, that nothing shall part us! You will make him see reason, Tista, will you not? I cannot go to him, or I would; and mamma, poor mamma, is so afraid of him when he is in his humours. There are only you and Uncle Paolo to manage him; and after the way he insulted Uncle Paolo last night, it will be all the harder. Think of it, Tista, while you are at work, and bring me word when you come to dinner."

"Never fear, love," replied Gianbattista confidently; "what else should I think of while I am hammering away all day? A little kiss, to give me courage."

In a moment he was gone, and his quick step resounded on the stairs as he ran down, leaving Lucia at the door above, to catch the last good-bye he called up to her when he reached the bottom. His fresh voice came up to her mingled with the rattle of the lumbering carts in the street. She answered the cry and went in.

Just then the sleepy Signora Pandolfi emerged from her chamber, clad in the inevitable skirt and white cotton jacket, her heavy black hair coiled in an irregular mass on the top of her head, and held in place by hair-pins that seemed to be on the point of dropping out.

"Ah, Lucia, my darling! Such a night as I have passed!" she moaned, sinking into a chair beside the table, on which the coffee-pot and the empty cups were still standing. "Such a night, my dear! I have not closed an eye. I am sure it is the last judgment! And this scirocco, too, it is enough to kill one!"

"Courage, mamma," answered Lucia gaily. "Things are never so bad as they seem."

"Oh, that monster, that monster!" groaned the fat lady. "He would make an angel lose his patience! Imagine, my dear, he insists that you shall be married in a fortnight, and he has left me money to go and buy things for your outfit! Oh dear! What are we to do? I shall go mad, my dear, and you will all have to take me to Santo Spirito! Oh dear! Oh dear! This scirocco!"

"I think papa will go mad first," said Lucia. "I never heard of such an insane proposition in my life. All in a moment too—I think I am to marry Tista—papa gets into a rage and—*patatunfate!* a new husband—like a conjurer's trick, such a comedy! I expected to see the door open at every minute, and Pulcinella walk in and beat everybody with a blown bladder! But Uncle Paolo did quite as well."

"Oh, my head!" complained the Signora Pandolfi. "I have not slept a wink!"

"And then it was shameful to see the way papa grew quiet and submissive when Uncle Paolo gave him the order for the crucifix! If it had been anybody but papa, I should have said that a miracle had been performed. But poor papa! No—the miracle of the soldi—that is the truth. I would like to catch sight of the saint who could work a miracle on papa! Capers, what a saint he would have to be!"

"Bacchus!" ejaculated Maria Luisa. "San Filippo Neri would be nowhere! The Holy Father would have to make a saint on purpose to convert that monster! A saint who should have nothing else to do. Oh, how hot it is! My head is splitting. What are we to do, Lucia, my heart? Tell me a little what we are to do—two poor women—all alone—oh dear!"

"In the first place, it needs courage, mamma," answered Lucia, "and a cup of coffee. It is still hot, and you have not had any——"

"Coffee! Who thinks of coffee?" cried the Signora Pandolfi, taking the cup from her daughter's hands, and drinking the liquid with more calmness than might have been anticipated.

"That is right," continued the girl. "Drink, mamma, it will do you good. And then, and then—let me see. And then you must talk to Suntarella about the dinner. That old woman has no head——"

"Dinner!" cried the mother, "who thinks of dinner at such a time? And he left me the money for the outfit, too. Lucia, my love, I have the fever—I will go to bed."

"Eh! What do you suppose? That is a way out of all difficulties," answered Lucia philosophically.

"But you cannot go out alone——"

"I will stay at home in that case."

"And then he will come to dinner, and ask to see the things——"

"There will be no things to show him," returned the young girl.

"Well? And then where should we be?" inquired the Signora Pandolfi. "I see him, my husband, coming back and finding that nothing has been done! He would tear his hair! He would kill us! He would bring his broomstick of a lawyer here to marry you this very afternoon, and what should we have gained then? It needs judgment, Lucia, my heart—judgment, judgment!" repeated the fat lady, tapping her forehead.

"Eh! If you have not enough for two, mamma, I do not know what we shall do."

"At the same time, something must be done," mused Maria Luisa. "My head is positively bursting! We might go out and buy half a dozen handkerchiefs, just to show him that we have begun. Do you think a few handkerchiefs would quiet him,

my love? You could always use them afterwards—a dozen would be too many——"

"Bacchus!" exclaimed Lucia, "I have only one nose."

"It is a pity," answered her mother rather irrelevantly. "After all, handkerchiefs are the cheapest things, and if we spread them out, all six, on the green sofa, they will make a certain effect—these men! One must deceive them, my child."

"Suppose we did another thing," began Lucia, looking out of the window. "We might get some things—in earnest, good things. They will always do for the wedding with Tista. Meanwhile, papa will of course have to change his mind, and then it will be all right."

"What genius!" cried the Signora Pandolfi. "Oh, Lucia! You have found it! And then we can just step into the workshop on our way—that will reassure your father."

"Perhaps, after all, it would be better to go and tell him the truth," said Lucia, beginning to walk slowly up and down the room. "He must know it, sooner or later."

"Are you mad, Lucia?" exclaimed her mother, holding up her hands in horror. "Just think how he would act if you went and faced him!"

"Then why not go and find Uncle Paolo?" suggested the girl. "He will know what is best to be

done, and will help us, you may be sure. Of course, he expected to see us before anythng was done in the matter. But I am not afraid to face papa all alone. Besides, Tista is talking to him at this very minute. I told him all he was to say, and he has so much courage!"

"I wish I had as much," moaned the Signora Pandolfi, lapsing into hesitation.

"Come, mamma, I will decide for you," said Lucia. "We will go and find Uncle Paolo, and we will do exactly as he advises."

"After all, that is best," assented her mother, rising slowly from her seat.

Half an hour later they left the house upon their errand, but they did not enter the workshop on their way. Indeed, if they had, they would have been surprised to find that Marzio was not there, and that Gianbattista was consequently not talking to him as Lucia had supposed.

When Gianbattista reached the workshop, he was told that Marzio had only remained five minutes, and had gone away as soon as everybody was at work. He hesitated a moment, wondering whether he might not go home again and spend another hour in Lucia's company; but it was not possible to foretell whether Marzio would be absent during the whole morning, and Gianbattista decided to remain. Moreover, the peculiar smell of the studio brought

with it the idea of work, and with the idea came the love of the art, not equal, perhaps, to the love of the woman, but more familiar from the force of habit.

All men feel such impressions, and most of all those who follow a fixed calling, and are accustomed to do their work in a certain place every day. Théophile Gautier confessed in his latter days that he could not work except in the office of the *Moniteur* —elsewhere, he said, he missed the smell of the printer's ink, which brought him ideas. Artists know well the effect of the atmosphere of the studio. Five minutes of that paint-laden air suffice to make the outer world a mere dream, and to recall the reality of work. There was an old dressing-gown to which Thackeray was attached as to a friend, and which he believed indispensable to composition. Balzac had his oval writing-room, when he grew rich, and the creamy white colour of the tapestries played a great part in his thoughts. The blacksmith loves the smoke of the forge and the fumes of hot iron on the anvil, and the chiseller's fingers burn to handle the tools that are strewn on the wooden bench.

Gianbattista stood at the door of the studio, and had he been master instead of apprentice, he could not have resisted the desire to go to his place and take up the work he had left on the previous evening. In a few minutes he was hammering away as busily

as though there were no such thing as marriage in the world, and nothing worth living for but the chiselling of beautiful arabesques on a silver ewer. His head was bent over his hands, his eyes followed intently the smallest movements of the tool he held, he forgot everything else, and became wholly absorbed in his occupation.

Nevertheless, much of a chiseller's work is mechanical, and as the smooth iron ran in and out of the tiny curves under the gentle tap of the hammer, the young man's thoughts went back to the girl he had left at the top of the stairs a quarter of an hour earlier; he thought of her, as he did daily, as his promised wife, and he fell to wondering when it would be, and how it would be. They often talked of the place in which they would live, as they had done that morning; and as neither of them was very imaginative, there was a considerable similarity between the speculations they indulged in at one time and at another. It was always to be a snug home, high up, with a terrace, pots of carnations, and red curtains. Their only difference of opinion concerned the colour of the walls and furniture. Like most Italians, they had very little sense of colour, and thought only of having everything gay, as they called it; that is to say, the upholstery was to be chosen of the most vivid hues, probably of those horrible tints known as aniline. Italians, as a rule and

especially those who belong to the same class as the Pandolfi family, have a strong dislike for the darker and softer tones. To them anything which is not vivid is sad, melancholy, and depressing to the senses. Gianbattista saw in his mind's eye a little apartment after his own heart, and was happy in the idea. But, as he followed the train of thought, it led him to the comparison of the home to which he proposed to take his wife with the one in which they now lived under her father's roof, and suddenly the scene of the previous evening rose clearly in the young man's imagination. He dropped his hammer, and stared up at the grated windows.

He went over the whole incident, and perhaps for the first time realised its true importance, and all the danger there might be in the future should Marzio attempt to pursue his plan to the end. Gianbattista had only once seen the lawyer who was thus suddenly thrust into his place. He remembered a thin, cadaverous man, in a long and gloomy black coat, but that was all. He did not recall his voice, nor the expression of his face; he had only seen him once, and had thought little enough of the meeting. It seemed altogether impossible, and beyond the bounds of anything rational, that this stranger should ever really be brought forward to be Lucia's husband.

For a moment the whole thing looked like an evil

dream, and Gianbattista smiled as he looked down again at his work. Then the reality of the occurrence rose up again and confronted him stubbornly. He was not mistaken, Marzio had actually pronounced those words, and Don Paolo had sprung forward to prevent Gianbattista from attacking his master then and there. The young man looked at his work, holding his tools in his hands, but hesitating to lay the point of the chisel on the silver, as he hesitated to believe the evidence of his memory.

CHAPTER V

Marzio had risen early that morning, as has been said, and had left the house before any one but Gianbattista was up. He was in reality far from inclined to drink his coffee in the company of his apprentice, and would have avoided it, if possible. Nor did he care to meet Lucia until he had found time and occasion to refresh his anger. His wife was too sleepy to quarrel, and hardly seemed to understand him when he gave her money and bade her look to Lucia's outfit, adding that the wedding was to take place immediately.

"Will you not let me sleep in peace, even in the morning?" she groaned.

"Magari! I wish you would sleep, and for ever!" growled Marzio, as he left the room.

He drank his coffee in silence, and went out. After looking into the workshop he walked slowly away in the direction of the Capitol. The damp morning air was pleasant to him, and the gloomy streets through which he passed were agreeable to

his state of feeling. He wished Rome might always wear such a dismal veil of dampness, scirocco, and cloud.

A man in a bad humour will go out of his way to be rained upon and blown against by the weather. We would all like to change our surroundings with our moods, to fill the world with sunshine when we are happy, and with clouds when we have stumbled in the labyrinths of life. Lovers wish that the whole earth might be one garden, crossed and recrossed by silent moonlit paths; and when love has taken the one and left the other, he who stays behind would have his garden changed to an angry ocean, and the sweet moss banks to storm-beaten rocks, that he may drown in the depths, or be dashed to pieces by the waves, before he has had time to know all that he has lost.

As we grow older, life becomes the expression of a mood, according to the way we have lived. He who seeks peace will find that with advancing age the peaceful moment, that once came so seldom, returns more readily, and that at last the moments unite to make hours, and the hours to build up days and years. He who stoops to petty strife will find that the oft-recurring quarrel has power to perpetuate the discontented weakness out of which it springs, and that it can make all life a hell. He who rejoices in action will learn that activity becomes a habit,

and at last excludes the possibility of rest, and the desire for it; and his lot is the best, for the momentary gladness in a great deed well done is worth a millennium of sinless, nerveless tranquillity. The positive good is as much better than the negative "non-bad," as it is better to save a life than not to destroy a life. But whatever temper of mind we choose will surely become chronic in time, and will be known to those among whom we live as our temper, our own particular temper, as distinguished from the tempers of other people.

Marzio had begun life in a bad humour. He delighted in his imaginary grievances, and inflicted his anger on all who came near him, only varying the manifestation of it to suit the position in which he chanced to find himself. With his wife he was overbearing; with his brother he was insolent; with his apprentice he was sullen; and with his associates at the old Falcone he played the demagogue. The reason of these phases was very simple. His wife could not oppose him, Don Paolo would not wrangle with him, Gianbattista imposed upon him by his superior calm and strength of character, and, lastly, his socialist friends applauded him and flattered his vanity. It is impossible for a weak man to appear always the same, and his weakness is made the more noticeable when he affects strength. The sinews of goodness are courage, moral and physical, a fact

which places all really good men and women beyond the reach of ridicule and above the high-water mark of the world's contempt.

Marzio lacked courage, and his virulence boiled most hotly when he had least to fear for his personal safety. It was owing to this innate weakness that such a combination of artistic sensitiveness and spasmodic arrogance was possible. The man's excitable imagination apprehended opposition where there was none, and his timidity made him fear a struggle, and hate himself for fearing it. As soon as he was alone, however, his thoughts generally returned to his art, and found expression in the delicate execution of the most exquisite fancies. Under other circumstances his character might have developed in a widely different way; his talent would still have been the same. There is a sort of nervous irritability which acts as a stimulant upon the faculties, and makes them work faster. With Marzio this unnatural state was chronic, and had become so because he had given himself up to it. It is a common disease in cities, where a man is forced to associate with his fellow-men, and to compete with them, whether he is naturally inclined to do so or not. If Marzio could have exercised his art while living as a hermit on the top of a lonely mountain he might have been a much better man.

He almost understood this himself as he walked

slowly through the Via delle Botteghe Oscure—"the street of dark shops"—in the early morning. He was thinking of the crucifix he was to make, and the interest he felt in it made him dread the consequences of the previous night's domestic wrangling. He wanted to be alone, and at the same time he wanted to see places and things which should suggest thoughts to him. He did not care whither he went so long as he kept out of the new Rome. When he reached the little garden in front of San Marco he paused, looked at the deep doorway of the church, remembered the barbarous mosaics within, and turned impatiently into a narrow street on the right —the beginning of the Via di Marforio.

The network of by-ways in this place is full of old-time memories. Here is the Via Giulio Romano, where the painter himself once lived; here is the Macel dei Corvi, where Michael Angelo once lodged; hard by stood the statue of Marforio, christened by the mediæval Romans after *Martis Forum,* and famous as the interlocutor of Pasquino. The place was a centre of artists and scholars in those days. Many a simple question was framed here, to fit the two-edged biting answer, repeated from mouth to mouth, and carefully written down among Pasquino's epigrams. First of all the low-born Roman hates all that is, and his next thought is to express his hatred in a stinging satire without being found out.

Like every real Roman, Marzio thought of old Marforio as he strolled up the narrow street towards the Capitol, and regretted the lawless days of conspiracy and treacherous deeds when every man's hand was against his fellow. He wandered on, his eyes cast down, and his head bent. Some one jostled against him, walking quickly in the opposite direction. He looked up and recognised Gasparo Carnesecchi's sallow face and long nose.

"Eh! Sor Marzio—is it you?" asked the lawyer.

"I think so," answered the artist. "Excuse me, I was thinking of something."

"No matter. Of what were you thinking, then? Of Pasquino?"

"Why not? But I was thinking of something else. You are in a hurry, I am sure. Otherwise we would speak of that affair."

"I am never in a hurry when there is business to be treated," replied Carnesecchi, looking down the street and preparing to listen.

"You know what I mean," Marzio began. "The matter we spoke of two days ago—my plans for my daughter."

The lawyer glanced quickly at his friend and assumed an indifferent expression. He was aware that his position was socially superior to that of the silver-chiseller, in spite of Marzio's great talent. But he knew also that Lucia was to have a dowry, and

that she would ultimately inherit all her father possessed. A dowry covers a multitude of sins in the eyes of a man to whom money is the chief object in life. Carnesecchi, therefore, meant to extract as many thousands of francs from Marzio as should be possible, and prepared himself to bargain. The matter was by no means settled, in spite of the chiseller's instructions to his wife concerning the outfit.

"We must talk," said Carnesecchi. "Not that I should be altogether averse to coming easily to an understanding, you know. But there are many things to be considered. Let us see."

"Yes, let us see," assented the other. "My daughter has education. She is also sufficiently well instructed. She could make a fine marriage. But then, you see, I desire a serious person for my son-in-law. What would you have? One must be prudent."

It is not easy to define exactly what a Roman means by the word "serious." In some measure it is the opposite of gay, and especially of what is young and unsettled. The German use of the word Philistine expresses it very nearly. A certain sober, straitlaced way of looking at life, which was considered to represent morality in Rome fifty years ago; a kind of melancholy superiority over all sorts of amusements, joined with a considerable asceticism

and the most rigid economy in the household—that is what was meant by the word "serious." To-day its signification has been slightly modified, but a serious man—*un uomo serio*—still represents to the middle-class father the ideal of the correct son-in-law.

"Eh, without prudence!" exclaimed Carnesecchi, elliptically, as though to ask where he himself would have been had he not possessed prudence in abundance.

"Exactly," answered Marzio, biting off the end of a common cigar and fixing his eyes on the lawyer's thin, keen face. "Precisely. I think—of course I do not know—but I think that you are a serious man. But then, I may be mistaken."

"Well, it is human to err, Sor Marzio. But then I am no longer of that age—what shall I say? Everybody knows I am serious. Do I lead the life of the café? Do I wear out my shoes in Piazza Colonna? Capers! I am a serious man."

"Yes," answered Marzio, though with some hesitation, as though he were prepared to argue even this point with the sallow-faced lawyer. He struck a match on the gaudy little paper box he carried and began to smoke thoughtfully. "Let us make a couple of steps," he said at last.

Both men moved slowly on for a few seconds, and

then stopped again. In Italy "a couple of steps" is taken literally.

"Let us see," said Carnesecchi. "Let us look at things as they are. In these days there are many excellent opportunities for investing money."

"Hum!" grunted Marzio, pulling a long face and looking up under his eyebrows. "I know that is your opinion, Sor Gasparo. I am sorry that you should put so much faith in the stability of things. So you, too, have got the malady of speculation. I suppose you are thinking of building a Palazzo Carnesecchi out at Sant' Agnese in eight floors and thirty-two apartments."

"Yes, I am mad," answered the lawyer ironically.

"Who knows?" returned the other. "I tell you they are building a Pompeii in those new quarters. When you and I are old men, crazy Englishmen will pay two francs to be allowed to wander about the ruins."

"It may be. I am not thinking of building. In the first place I have not the *soldi*."

"And if you had?" inquired Marzio.

"What nonsense! Besides, no one has. It is all done on credit, and the devil take the hindmost. But if I really had a million—eh! I know what I would do."

"Let us hear. I also know what I would do.

Basta! What is the use of building castles in the air?"

"In the air, or not in the air, if I had a million, I know what I would do."

"I would have a newspaper," said Marzio. "Whew! how it would sting!"

"It would sting you, and bleed you into the bargain," returned the lawyer with some contempt. "No one makes money out of newspapers in these times. If I had money I would be a deputy. With prudence there is much to be earned in the Chambers, and petitioners know that they must pay cash."

"It is certainly a career," assented the artist. "But, as you say, it needs money for the first investment."

"Not so much as a million, though. With a good opening, and some knowledge of the law, a small sum would be enough."

"It is a career, as I said," repeated Marzio. "But five thousand francs would not give you an introduction to it."

"Five thousand francs!" exclaimed Carnesecchi, with a scornful laugh. "With five thousand francs you had better play at the lottery. After all, if you lose, it is nothing."

"It is a great deal of money, Sor Gasparo," replied the chiseller. "When you have made it little by little—then you know what it means."

"Perhaps. But we have been standing here more than a quarter of an hour, and I have a client waiting for me about a big affair, an affair of millions."

"Bacchus!" ejaculated Marzio. "You are not in a hurry about the matter. Well, we can always talk, and I will not keep you."

"We might walk together, and say what we have to say."

"I am going to the Capitol," Marzio said, for he had been walking in that direction when they met.

"That is my way, too," answered the lawyer, forgetting that he had run into Marzio as he came down the street.

"Eh! That is lucky," remarked the artist with an almost imperceptible smile. "As I was saying," he continued, "five thousand francs is not the National Bank, but it is a very pretty little sum, especially when there is something more to be expected in the future."

"That depends on the future. But I do not call it a sum. Nothing under twenty thousand is a sum, properly speaking."

"Who has twenty thousand francs?" laughed Marzio, shrugging his shoulders with an incredulous look.

"You talk as though Rome were an asylum for paupers," returned Carnesecchi. "Who has twenty thousand francs? Why, everybody has. You have,

I have. One must be a beggar not to have that much. After all, we are talking about business, Sor Marzio. Why should I not say it? I have always said that I would not marry with less than that for a dowry. Why should one throw away one's opportunities? To please some one? It is not my business to try and please everybody. One must be just."

"Of course. What? Am I not just? But if justice were done, where would some people be? I say it, too. If you marry my daughter you will expect a dowry. Have I denied it? And then, five thousand is not so little. There is the outfit, too; I have to pay for that."

"That is not my affair," laughed the lawyer. "That is the business of the woman. But five thousand francs is not my affair either. Think of the responsibilities a man incurs when he marries! Five thousand! It is not even a cup of coffee! You are talking to a *galantuomo,* an honest man, Sor Marzio. Reflect a little."

"I reflect—yes! I reflect that you ask a great deal of money, Signor Carnesecchi," replied Marzio with some irritation.

"I never heard that anybody gave money unless it was asked for."

"It will not be for lack of asking if you do not get it," retorted the artist.

"What do you mean, Signor Pandolfi?" inquired

Carnesecchi, drawing himself up to his full height and then striking his hollow chest with his lean hand. "Do you mean that I am begging money of you? Do you mean to insult an honest man, a *galantuomo?* By heaven, Signor Pandolfi, I would have you know that Gasparo Carnesecchi never asked a favour of any man! Do you understand? Let us speak clearly."

"Who has said anything?" asked Marzio. "Why do you heat yourself in this way? And then, after all, we shall arrange this affair. You wish it. I wish it. Why should it not be arranged? If five thousand does not suit you, name a sum. We are Christians—we will doubtless arrange. But we must talk. How much should you think, Sor Gasparo?"

"I have said it. As I told you just now, I have always said that I would not marry with less than eighteen thousand francs of dowry. What is the use of repeating? Words are not roasted chestnuts."

"Nor eighteen thousand francs either," answered the other. "Magari! I wish they were. You should have them in a moment. But a franc is a franc."

"I did not say it was a cabbage," observed Carnesecchi. "After all, why should I marry?"

"Perhaps you will not," suggested Marzio, who was encouraged to continue the negotiations, however, by the diminution in the lawyer's demands.

"Why not?" asked the latter sharply. "Do you think nobody else has daughters?"

"If it comes to that, why have you not married before?"

"Because I did not choose to marry," answered Carnesecchi, beginning to walk more briskly, as though to push the matter to a conclusion.

Marzio said nothing in reply. He saw that his friend was pressing him, and understood that, to do so, the lawyer must be anxious to marry Lucia. The chiseller therefore feigned indifference, and was silent for some minutes. At the foot of the steps of the Capitol he stopped again.

"You know, Sor Gasparo," he said, "the reason why I did not arrange about Lucia's marriage a long time ago, was because I was not particularly in a hurry to have her married at all. And I am not in a hurry now, either. We shall have plenty of opportunities of discussing the matter hereafter. Good-bye, Sor Gasparo. I have business up there, and that client of yours is perhaps impatient about his millions."

"Good-bye," answered Carnesecchi. "There is plenty of time, as you say. Perhaps we may meet this evening at the Falcone."

"Perhaps," said Marzio drily, and turned away.

He had a good understanding of his friend's character, and though in his present mood he would

have been glad to fix the wedding day, and sign the marriage contract at once, he had no intention of yielding to Carnesecchi's exorbitant demands. The lawyer was in need of money, Marzio thought, and as he himself was the possessor of what the other coveted, there could be little doubt as to the side on which the advantage would ultimately be taken. Marzio went half-way up the steps of the Capitol, and then stopped to look at the two wretched wolves which the Roman municipality thinks it incumbent on the descendants of Romulus to support. He thought one of them very like Carnesecchi. He watched the poor beasts a moment or two as they tramped and swung and pressed their lean sides against the bars of their narrow cage.

"What a sympathetic animal it is!" he exclaimed aloud. A passer-by stared at him and then went on hurriedly, fearing that he might be mad. Indeed, there was a sort of family likeness between the lawyer, the chiseller, and the wolves.

Other thoughts, however, occupied Marzio's attention; and as soon as he was sure that his friend was out of the way, he descended the steps. He did not care whither he went, but he had no especial reason for climbing the steep ascent to the Capitol. The crucifix his brother had ordered from him on the previous evening engaged his attention, and it was as much for the sake of being alone and of

thinking about the work that he had taken his solitary morning walk, as with the hope of finding in some church a suggestion or inspiration which might serve him. He knew what was to be found in Roman churches well enough; the Crucifixion in the Trinità dei Pellegrini and the one in San Lorenzo in Lucina—both by Guido Reni, and both eminently unsympathetic to his conception of the subject—he had often looked at them, and did not care to see them again. At last he entered the Church of the Gesù, and sat down upon a chair in a corner.

He did not look up. The interior of the building was as familiar to him as the outside. He sat in profound thought, occasionally twisting his soft hat in his hands, and then again remaining quite motionless. He did not know how long he stayed there. The perfect silence was pleasant to him, and when he rose he felt that the idea he had sought was found, and could be readily expressed. With a sort of sigh of satisfaction he went out again into the air and walked quickly towards his workshop.

The men told him that Gianbattista was busy within, and after glancing sharply at the work which was proceeding, Marzio opened the inner door and entered the studio. He strode up to the table and took up the body of the ewer, which lay on its pad where he had left it the night before. He held it in his hands for a moment, and then, pushing the

leather cushion towards Gianbattista, laid it down. "Finish it," he said shortly; "I have something else to do."

The apprentice looked up in astonishment, as though he suspected that Marzio was jesting.

"I am afraid——" he answered with hesitation.

"It makes no difference; finish it as best you can; I am sick of it; you will do it well enough. If it is bad, I will take the responsibility."

"Do you mean me really to finish it—altogether?"

"Yes; I tell you I have a great work on hand. I cannot waste my time over such toys as acanthus leaves and cherubs' eyes!" He bent down and examined the thing carefully. "You had better lay aside the neck and take up the body just where I left it, Tista," he continued. "The scirocco is in your favour. If it turns cold to-morrow the cement may shrink, and you will have to melt it out again."

Marzio spoke to him as though there had not been the least difference between them, as though Gianbattista had not proposed to cut his throat the night before, as though he himself had not proposed to marry Carnesecchi to Lucia.

"Take my place," he said. "The cord is the right length for you, as it is too short for me. I am going to model."

Without more words Marzio went and took a large and heavy slate from the corner, washed it

carefully, and dried it with his handkerchief. Then he provided himself with a bowl full of twisted lengths of red wax, and with a couple of tools he sat down to his work. Gianbattista, having changed his seat, looked over the tools his master had been using, with a workman's keen glance, and, taking up his own hammer, attacked the task given him. For some time neither of the men spoke.

"I have been to church," remarked Marzio at last, as he softened a piece of wax between his fingers before laying it on the slate. The news was so astounding that Gianbattista uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"You need not be frightened," answered the artist. "I only went to look at a picture, and I did not look at it after all. I shall go to a great many more churches before I have finished this piece of work. You ought to go to the churches and study, Tista. Everything is useful in our art—pictures, statues, mosaics, metal-work. Now I believe there is not a really good crucifix, nor a crucifixion, in Rome. It is strange, too, I have dreamed of one all my life."

Gianbattista did not find any answer ready in reply to the statement. The words sounded so strangely in Marzio's mouth this morning, that the apprentice was confused. And yet the two had often discussed the subject before.

"You do not seem to believe me," continued Marzio quietly. "I assure you it is a fact. The other things of the kind are not much better either. Works of art, perhaps, but not satisfactory. Even Michael Angelo's *Pietà* in Saint Peter's does not please me. They say it did not please the people of his time either—he was too young to do anything of that sort—he was younger than you, Tista, only twenty-four years old when he made that statue."

"Yes," answered Gianbattista, "I have heard you say so." He bent over his work, wondering what his master meant by this declaration of taste. It seemed as though Marzio felt the awkwardness of the situation and was exerting himself to make conversation. The idea was so strange that the apprentice could almost have laughed. Marzio continued to soften the wax between his fingers, and to lay the pieces of it on the slate, pressing them roughly into the shape of a figure.

"Has Paolo been here?" asked the master after another long pause.

Gianbattista merely shook his head to express a negative.

"Then he will come," continued Marzio. "He will not leave me in peace all day, you may be sure."

"What should he come for? He never comes," said the young man.

"He will be afraid that I will have Lucia married

before supper time. I know him—and he knows me."

"If he thinks that, he does not know you at all," answered Gianbattista quietly.

"Indeed?" exclaimed Marzio, raising his voice to the ironical tone he usually affected when any one contradicted him. "To-day, to-morrow, or the next day, what does it matter? I told you last night that I had made up my mind."

"And I told you that I had made up mine."

"Oh yes—boy's threats! I am not the man to be intimidated by that sort of thing. Look here, Tista, I am in earnest. I have considered this matter a long time; I have determined that I will not be brow-beaten any longer by two women and a priest—certainly not by you. If things go on as they are going, I shall soon not be master in my own house."

"You would be the only loser," retorted Gianbattista.

"Have done with this, Tista!" exclaimed Marzio angrily. "I am tired of your miserable jokes. You have gone over to the enemy, you are Paolo's man, and if I tolerate you here any longer it is merely because I have taught you something, and you are worth your wages. As for the way I have treated you during all these years, I cannot imagine how I could have been such a fool. I should think anybody might see through your hypocritical ways."

"Go on," said Gianbattista calmly. "You know our bargain of last night."

"I will risk that. If I see any signs of your amiable temper I will have you arrested for threatening my life. I am not afraid of you, my boy, but I do not care to die just at present. You have all had your way long enough, I mean to have mine now."

"Let us talk reasonably, Sor Marzio. You say we have had our way. You talk as though you had been in slavery in your own house. I do not think that is the opinion of your wife, nor of your daughter. As for me, I have done nothing but execute your orders for years, and if I have learnt something, it has not been by trying to overrule you or by disregarding your advice. Two years ago, you almost suggested to me that I should marry Lucia. Of course, I asked nothing better, and we agreed to wait until she was old enough. We discussed the matter a thousand times. We settled the details. I agreed to go on working for the same small wages instead of leaving you, as I might have done, to seek my fortune elsewhere. You see I am calm, I acknowledge that I was grateful to you for having taught me so much, and I am grateful still. You have just given me another proof of your confidence in putting this work into my hands to finish. I am grateful for that. Well, we have talked of the

marriage often; I have lived in your house; I have seen Lucia every day, for you have let us be together as much as we pleased; the result is that I not only am more anxious to marry her than I was before—I love her; I am not ashamed to say so. I know you laugh at women and say they are no better than monkeys with parrots' heads. I differ from you. Lucia is an angel, and I love her as she loves me. What happens? One day you take an unreasonable dislike for me, without even warning me of the fact, and then, suddenly, last night, you come home and say she is to marry the Avvocato Gasparo Carnesecchi. Now, for a man who has taught me that there is no God but reason, all this strikes me as very unreasonable. Honestly, Sor Marzio, do you not think so yourself?"

Marzio looked at his apprentice and frowned, as though hesitating whether to lose his temper and launch into the invective style, or to answer Gianbattista reasonably. Apparently he decided in favour of the more peaceable course.

"It is unworthy of a man who follows reason to lose his self-control and indulge in vain threats," he answered, assuming a grand didactic air. "You attempt to argue with me. I will show you what argument really means, and whither it leads. Now answer me some questions, Tista, and I will prove

that you are altogether in the wrong. When a man is devoted to a great and glorious cause, should he not do everything in his power to promote its success against those who oppose it?"

"Undoubtedly," assented Gianbattista.

"And should not a man be willing to sacrifice his individual preferences in order to support and to further the great end of his life?"

"Bacchus! I believe it!"

"Then how much the more easy must it be for a man to support his cause when there are no individual preferences in the way!" said Marzio, triumphantly. "That is true reason, my boy. That is the inevitable logic of the great system."

"I do not understand the allegory," answered Gianbattista.

"It is as simple as roasted chestnuts," returned Marzio. "Even if I liked you, it would be my duty to prevent you from marrying Lucia. As I do not like you—you understand?"

"I understand that," replied the young man. "For some reason or other you hate me. But, apart from the individual preferences, which you say it is your duty to overcome, I do not see why you are morally obliged to hinder our marriage, after having felt morally obliged to promote it?"

"Because you are a traitor to the cause," cried

Marzio, with sudden fierceness. "Because you are a friend of Paolo. Is not that enough?"

"Poor Don Paolo seems to stick in your throat," observed Gianbattista. "I do not see what he has done, except that he prevented me from killing you last night!"

"Paolo! Paolo is a snake, a venomous viper! It is his business, his only aim in life, to destroy my peace, to pervert my daughter from the wholesome views I have tried to teach her, to turn you aside from the narrow path of austere Italian virtue, to draw you away from following in the footsteps of Brutus, of Cassius, of the great Romans, of me, your teacher and master! That is all Paolo cares for, and it is enough—more than enough! And he shall pay me for his presumptuous interference, the villain!"

Marzio's voice sank into a hissing whisper as he bent over the wax he was twisting and pressing. Gianbattista glanced at his pale face, and inwardly wondered at the strange mixture of artistic genius, of bombastic rhetoric and relentless hatred, all combined in the strange man whom destiny had given him for a master. He wondered, too, how he had ever been able to admire the contrasts of virulence and weakness, of petty hatred and impossible aspirations which had of late revealed themselves to him

in a new light. Have we not most of us assisted at the breaking of the Image of Baal, at the destruction of an imaginary representative of an illogical ideal?

"Well, Sor Marzio," said Gianbattista after a pause, "if I were to return to my worship of you and your principles—what would you do? Would you take me back to your friendship and give me your daughter?"

Marzio looked up suddenly, and stared at the apprentice in surprise. But the fresh young face gave no sign. Gianbattista had spoken quietly, and was again intent upon his work.

"If you gave me a proof of your sincerity," answered Marzio, in low tones, "I would do much for you. Yes, I would give you Lucia—and the business too, when I am too old to work. But it must be a serious proof—no child's play."

"What do you call a serious proof? A profession of faith?"

"Yes—sealed with the red wax that is a little thicker than water," answered Marzio grimly, his eyes still fixed on Gianbattista's face.

"In blood," said the young man calmly. "Whose blood would you like, Sor Marzio?"

"Paolo's!"

The chiseller spoke in a scarcely audible whisper,

and bent low over his slate, modelling hard at the figure under his fingers.

"I thought so," muttered Gianbattista between his teeth. Then he raised his voice a little and continued: "And have you the courage, Sor Marzio, to sit there and bargain with me to kill your brother, bribing me with the offer of your daughter's hand? Why do you not kill him yourself, since you talk of such things?"

"Nonsense, my dear Tista—I was only jesting," said the other nervously. "It is just like your folly to take me in earnest." The anger had died out of Marzio's voice and he spoke almost persuasively.

"I do not know," answered the young man. "I think you were in earnest for a moment. I would not advise you to talk in that way before any one else. People might interpret your meaning seriously."

"After all, you yourself were threatening to cut my throat last night," said Marzio, with a forced laugh. "It is the same thing. My life is as valuable as Paolo's. I only suggested that you should transfer your tender attentions from me to my brother."

"It is one thing to threaten a man to his face. It is quite another to offer a man a serious inducement to commit murder. Since you have been so

very frank with me, Sor Marzio, I will confess that if the choice lay between killing you, or killing Don Paolo, under the present circumstances I would not hesitate a moment."

"And which would you——"

"Neither," replied the young man, with a cool laugh. "Don Paolo is too good to be killed, and you are not good enough. Come and look at the cherub's head I have made."

CHAPTER VI

Lucia's cheerfulness was not genuine, and any one possessing greater penetration than her mother would have understood that she was, in reality, more frightened than she was willing to show. The girl had a large proportion of common sense, combined with a quicker perception than the stout Signora Pandolfi. She did not think that she knew anything about logic, and she had always shown a certain inconsistency in her affection for Gianbattista, but she had nevertheless a very clear idea of what was reasonable, a quality which is of immense value in difficulties, though it is very often despised in every-day life by people who believe themselves blessed by the inspirations of genius.

It seems very hard to make people of other nationalities understand that the Italians of the present day are not an imaginative people. It is nevertheless true, and it is only necessary to notice that they produce few, if any, works of imagination. They have no writers of fiction, no poets, few com-

posers of merit and few artists who rank with those of other nations. They possessed the creative faculty once; they have lost it in our day, and it does not appear that they are likely to regain it. On the other hand, the Italians are remarkable engineers, first-rate mathematicians, clever, if unscrupulous, diplomatists. Though they overrate their power and influence, they have shown a capacity for organisation which is creditable on the whole. If they fail to obtain the position they seek in Europe, their failure will have been due to their inordinate vanity and over-governing, if I may coin the word, rather than to an innate want of intelligence.

The qualities and defects of the Italian nation all existed in the Pandolfi family. Marzio possessed more imagination than most of his countrymen, and he had, besides, that extraordinary skill in his manual execution of his work, which Italians have often exhibited on a large scale. On the other hand, he was full of bombastic talk about principles which he called great. His views concerning society, government, and the future of his country were entirely without balance, and betrayed an amazing ignorance of the laws which direct the destinies of mankind. He suffered in a remarkable degree from that mental disease which afflicts Italians—the worship of the fetish—of words which mean little, and are supposed

to mean much, of names in history which have been exalted by the rhetoric of demagogues from the obscurity to which they had been wisely consigned by the judgment of scholars. He was alternately weak and despotic, cunning about small things which concerned his own fortunes, and amazingly foolish about the set of ideas which he loosely defined as politics.

Lucia's nature illustrated another phase of the Italian character, and one which, if it is less remarkable, is much more agreeable. She possessed the character which looks at everything from the point of view of daily life. Without imagination, she regarded only the practical side of existence. Her vanity was confined to a modest wish to make the best of her appearance, while her ambition went no further than the strictest possibility, in the shape of a marriage with Gianbattista Bordogni, and a simple little apartment with a terrace with pots of pinks. Had she known how much richer her father was than she suspected him of being, the enlargement of her views for the future would have been marked by a descent, from the fourth story of the house which was to be her imaginary home, to the third story. It could never have entered her head that Gianbattista ought to give up his profession until he was too old to work any longer. In her estimation, the mere possession of money could not

justify a change of social position. She had been accustomed from her childhood to hear her father air his views in regard to the world in general, but his preaching had produced but little impression upon her. When he thought she was listening in profound attention to his discourse, she was usually wishing that he could be made to see the absurdity of his theories. She wished also that he would sacrifice some of his enthusiasm for the sake of a little more quiet in the house, for she saw that his talking distressed her mother. Further than this she cared little what he said, and not at all for what he thought. Her mind was generally occupied with the one subject which absorbed her thoughts, and which had grown to be by far the most important part of her nature, her love for Gianbattista Bordogni.

Upon that point she was inflexible. Her Uncle Paolo might have led her to change her mind in regard to many things, for she was open to persuasion where her common sense was concerned. But in her love for Gianbattista she was fixed and determined. It would have been more easy to turn her father from his ideas than to make Lucia give up the man she loved. When Marzio had suddenly declared that she should marry the lawyer, her first feeling had been one of ungovernable anger which had soon found vent in tears. During the night she

had thought the matter over, and had come to the conclusion that it was only an evil jest, invented by Marzio to give her pain. But in the morning it seemed to her as though on the far horizon a black cloud of possible trouble were gathering; she had admitted to herself that her father might be in earnest, and she had felt something like the anticipation of the great struggle of her life. Then she felt that she would die rather than submit.

She had no theatrical desire to swear a fearful oath with Gianbattista that they should drown themselves at the Ponte Quattro Capi rather than be separated. Her nature was not dramatic, any more than his. The young girl dressed herself quickly, and made up her mind that if any pressure were brought to bear upon her she would not yield, but that, until then, there was no use in making phrases, and it would be better to be as cheerful as possible under the circumstances. But for Lucia's reassuring manner, the Signora Pandolfi would have doubtless succumbed to her feelings and gone to bed. Lucia, however, had no intention of allowing her mother any such weakness, and accordingly alternately comforted her and suggested means of escape from the position, as though she were herself the mother and Maria Luisa were her child.

They found Don Paolo in his small lodging, and

he bid them enter, that they might all talk the matter over.

"In the first place," said the priest, "it is wrong. In the second place it is impossible. Thirdly, Marzio will not attempt to carry out his threat."

"Dear me! How simple you make it seem!" exclaimed the Signora Pandolfi, reviving at his first words, like a tired horse when he sees the top of the hill.

"But if papa should try and force me to it—what then?" asked Lucia, who was not so easily satisfied.

"He cannot force you to it, my child—the law will not allow him to do so. I told you so last night."

"But the law is so far off—and he is so violent," answered the young girl.

"Never fear," said Don Paolo, reassuring her. "I will manage it all. There will be a struggle, perhaps; but I will make him see reason. He had been with his friends last night, and his mind was excited; he was not himself. He will have thought differently of it this morning."

"On the contrary," put in the Signora Pandolfi, "he waked me up at daylight and gave me a quantity of money to go and buy Lucia's outfit. And he will come home at midday and ask to see the things I have bought, and so I thought perhaps we had better buy something just to show him—half a dozen

handkerchiefs—something to make a figure, you understand?"

Don Paolo smiled, and Lucia looked sympathetically from him to her mother.

"I am afraid that half a dozen handkerchiefs would have a bad effect," said the priest. "Either he would see that you are not in earnest, and then he would be very angry, or else he would be deceived and would think that you were really buying the outfit. In that case you would have done harm. This thing must not go any further. The idea must be got out of his head as soon as possible."

"But if I do nothing at all before dinner he will be furious—he will cry out that we are all banded together against him——"

"So we are," said Don Paolo simply.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" moaned the Signora Pandolfi, looking for her handkerchief in the anticipation of fresh tears.

"Do not cry, mamma. It is of no use," said Lucia.

"No, it is of no use to cry," assented the priest. "There is nothing to be done but to go and face Marzio, and not leave him until he has changed his mind. You are afraid to meet him at midday. I will go now to the workshop and find him."

"Oh, you are an angel, Paolo!" cried Maria Luisa, regaining her composure and replacing her

handkerchief in her pocket. "Then we need not buy anything? What a relief!"

"I told you Uncle Paolo would know what to do," said Lucia. "He is so good—and so courageous. I would not like to face papa this morning. Will you really go, Uncle Paolo?" The young girl went and took down his cloak and hat from a peg on the wall, and brought them to him.

"Of course I will go, and at once," he answered. "But I must give you a word of advice."

"We will do everything you tell us," said the two women together.

"You must not ask him any questions, nor refer to the matter at all when he comes home."

"Diana! I would as soon speak of death!" exclaimed the Signora Pandolfi.

"And if he begins to talk about it you must not answer him, nor irritate him in any way."

"Be easy about that," answered the fat lady. "Never meddle with sleeping dogs—I know."

"If he grows very angry you must refer him to me."

"Oh, but that is another matter! I would rather offer pepper to a cat than talk to him of you. You would see how he would curse and swear and call you by bad names."

"Well, you must not do anything to make him swear, because that would be a sin; but if he only

abuses me, I do not mind. He will do that when I talk to him. Perhaps after all, if he mentions the matter, you had better remain silent."

"Eh! that will be easy. He talks so much, and he talks so fast, never waiting for an answer. But are you not afraid for yourself, dear Paolo?"

"Oh, he will not hurt me—I am not afraid of him," answered the priest. "He will talk a little, he will use some big words, and then it will be finished. You see, it is not a great thing, after all. Take courage, Maria Luisa, it will be a matter of half an hour."

"Heaven grant it may be only that!" murmured Marzio's wife, turning up her eyes, and rising from her chair.

Lucia, who, as has been said, had a very keen appreciation of facts, did not believe that things would go so smoothly.

"You had better come back with him to our house when it is all over," she said, "just to give us a sign that it is settled, you know, Uncle Paolo."

Don Paolo himself had his doubts about the issue, although he put such a brave face on it, and in spite of the Signora Pandolfi. That good lady was by nature very sincere, but she always seemed to bring an irrelevant and comic element into the proceedings.

The result of the interview was that, in half an

hour, Don Paolo knocked at the door of the workshop in the Via dei Falegnami, where Marzio and Gianbattista were at work. The chiseller's voice bade him enter.

Don Paolo had not found much time to collect his thoughts before he reached the scene of battle, but his opinion of the matter in hand was well formed. He loved his niece, and he had begun to like Gianbattista. He knew the lawyer, Carnesecchi, by reputation, and what he had heard of him did not prejudice him in the man's favour. It would have been the same had Marzio chosen any one else. In the priest's estimation, Gianbattista had a right to expect the fulfilment of the many promises which had been made to him. To break those promises for no ostensible reason, just as Gianbattista seemed to be growing up to be a sensible man, was an act of injustice which Don Paolo would not permit if he could help it. Gianbattista was not, perhaps, a model man, but, by contrast with Marzio, he seemed almost saintly. He had a good disposition and no vices; married to Lucia and devoted to his art, much might be expected of him. On the other hand, Gasparo Carnesecchi represented the devil in person. He was known to be an advanced freethinker, a radical, and, perhaps, worse than a radical—a socialist. He was certainly not very rich, and Lucia's dowry would be an object to him; he would

doubtless spend the last copper of the money in attempting to be elected to the Chambers. If he succeeded, he would represent another unit in that ill-guided minority which has for its sole end the subversion of the existing state of things. He would probably succeed in getting back the money he had spent, and more also, by illicit means. If he failed, the money would be lost, and he would go from bad to worse, intriguing and mixing himself up with the despicable radical Press, in the hope of getting a hearing and a place.

There is a scale in the meaning of the word socialist. In France it means about the same thing as a communist, when one uses plain language. When one uses the language of Monsieur Drumont, it means a Jew. In England a socialist is equal to a French conservative republican. In America it means a thief. In Germany it means an ingenious individual of restricted financial resources, who generally fails to blow up some important personage with wet dynamite. In Italy a socialist is an anarchist pure and simple, who wishes to destroy everything existing for the sake of dividing a wealth which does not exist at all. It also means a young man who orders a glass of water and a toothpick at a *café*, and is able to talk politics for a considerable time on this slender nourishment. Signor Succi and Signor Merlatti have discovered nothing new.

Their miracles of fasting may be observed by the curious at any time in a Roman *café*.

Don Paolo regarded the mere idea of an alliance with Gasparo Carnesecchi as an outrage upon common sense, and when he entered Marzio's workshop he was determined to say so. Marzio looked up with an air of inquiry, and Gianbattista foresaw what was coming. He nodded to the priest, and brought forward the old straw chair from the corner; then he returned to his work in silence.

"You will have guessed my errand," Don Paolo began, by way of introducing his subject.

"No," answered Marzio doggedly. "Something about the crucifix, I suppose."

"Not at all," returned the priest, folding his hands over the handle of his umbrella. "A much more delicate matter. You suggested last night an improbable scheme for marrying Lucia."

"You had better say that I told you plainly what I mean to do. If you have come to talk about that, you had better talk to the workmen outside. They may answer you. I will not!"

Don Paolo was not to be so easily put off. He waited a moment as though to give Marzio time to change his mind, and then proceeded.

"There are three reasons why this marriage will not take place," he said. "In the first place, it is wrong—that is my point of view. In the second

place, it is impossible—and that is the view the law takes of it. Thirdly, it will not take place because you will not attempt to push it. What do you say of my reasons, Marzio?"

"They are worthy of you," answered the artist. "In the first place, I do not care a fig for what you think is wrong, or right either. Secondly, I will take the law into my own hands. Thirdly, I will bring it about and finish it in a fortnight; and fourthly, you may go to the devil! What do you think of my reasons, Paolo? They are better than yours, and much more likely to prevail."

"My dear Marzio," returned the priest quietly, "you may say anything you please, I believe, in these days of liberty. But the law will not permit you to act upon your words. If you can persuade your daughter to marry Gasparo Carnesecchi of her own free will, well and good. If you cannot, there is a statute, I am quite sure, which forbids your dragging her up the steps of the Capitol, and making her sign her name by force or violence in the presence of the authorities. You may take my word for it; and so you had better dismiss the matter from your mind at once, and think no more about it."

"I remember that you told her so last night," growled Marzio, growing pale with anger.

"Certainly."

"You—you—you priest!" cried the chiseller, unable in his rage to find an epithet which he judged more degrading. Don Paolo smiled.

"Yes, I am a priest," he answered calmly.

"Yes, you are a priest," yelled Marzio, "and what is to become of paternal authority in a household where such fellows as you are listening at the keyholes? Is a man to have no more rights? Are we to be ruled by women and creatures in petticoats? Viper! Poisoning my household, teaching my daughter to disobey me, my wife to despise me, my paid workmen to——"

"Silence!" cried Gianbattista in ringing tones, and with the word he sprang to his feet and clapped his hand on Marzio's mouth.

The effect was sudden and unexpected. Marzio was utterly taken by surprise. It was incredible to him that any one should dare to forcibly prevent him from indulging in the language he had used with impunity for so many years. He leaned back pale and astonished, and momentarily dumb with amazement. Gianbattista stood over him, his young cheeks flushed with anger, and his broad fist clenched.

"If you dare to talk in that way to Don Paolo, I will kill you with my hands!" he said, his voice sinking lower with concentrated determination. "I have had enough of your foul talk. He is a better

man than you, as I told you last night, and I repeat it now—take care——"

Marzio made a movement as though he would rise, and at the same instant Gianbattista seized the long, fine-pointed punch, which served for the eyes of the cherubs—a dangerous weapon in a determined hand.

Don Paolo had risen from his chair, and was trying to push himself between the two. But Gianbattista would not let him.

"For heaven's sake," cried the priest in great distress, "no violence, Tista—I will call the men——"

"Never fear," answered the apprentice quietly; "the man is a coward."

"To me—you dare to say that to me!" exclaimed Marzio, drawing back at the same time.

"Yes—it is quite true. But do not suppose that I think any the worse of you on that account, Sor Marzio."

With this taunt, delivered in a voice that expressed the most profound contempt, Gianbattista went back to his seat and took up his hammer as though nothing had happened. Don Paolo drew a long breath of relief. As for Marzio, his teeth chattered with rage. His weakness had been betrayed at last, and by Gianbattista. All his life he had succeeded in concealing the physical fear which his words belied. He had cultivated the habit of offering to face danger, speaking of it in a quiet way, as he had observed that brave

men did. He had found it good policy to tell people that he was not afraid of them, and his bearing had hitherto saved him from physical violence. Now he felt as though all his nerves had been drawn out of his body. He had been terrified, and he knew that he had shown it. Gianbattista's words stung in his ears like the sting of wasps.

"You shall never enter this room again," he hissed out between his teeth. The young man shrugged his shoulders as though he did not care. Don Paolo sat down again and grasped his umbrella.

"Gianbattista," said the priest, "I am grateful to you for your friendship, my boy. But it is very wrong to be violent——"

"It is one of the seven deadly sins!" cried Marzio, finding his voice at last, and by a strange accident venting his feelings in a sentence which might have been spoken by a confessor to a penitent.

Gianbattista could not help laughing, but he shook his head as though to explain that it was not his fault if he was violent with such a man.

"It is very wrong to threaten people, Tista," repeated Don Paolo; "and besides it does not hurt me, what Marzio says. Let us all be calm. Marzio, let us discuss this matter reasonably. Tista, do not be angry at anything that is said. There is nothing to be done but to look at the question quietly."

"It is very well for you to talk like that,"

grumbled Marzio, pretending to busy himself over his model in order to cover his agitation.

"It is of no use to talk in any other way," answered the priest. "I return to the subject. I only want to convince you that you will find it impossible to carry out your determination by force. You have only to ask the very man you have hit upon, the Avvocato Carnesecchi, and he will tell you the same thing. He knows the law better than you or I. He will refuse to be a party to such an attempt. Ask him, if you do not believe me."

"Yes; a pretty position you want to put me in, by the body of a dog! To ask a man to marry my daughter by force! A fine opinion he would conceive of my domestic authority! Perhaps you will take upon yourself to go and tell him—won't you, dear Paolo? It would save me the trouble."

"I think that is your affair," answered Don Paolo, taking him in earnest. "Nevertheless, if you wish it——"

"Oh, this is too much!" cried Marzio, his anger rising again. "It is not enough that you thwart me at every turn, but you come here to mock me, to make a figure of me! Take care, Paolo, take care! You may go too far."

"I would not advise you to go too far, Sor Marzio," put in Gianbattista, turning half round on his stool.

"Cannot I speak without being interrupted? Go on with your work, Tista, and let us talk this matter out. I tell you, Paolo, that I do not want your advice, and that I have had far too much of your interference. I will inquire into this matter, so far as it concerns the law, and I will show you that I am right, in spite of all your surmises and prophecies. A man is master in his own house and must remain so, whatever laws are made. There is no law which can force a man to submit to the dictation of his brother—even if his brother is a priest."

Marzio spoke more calmly than he had done hitherto, in spite of the sneer in the last sentence. He had broken down, and he felt that Paolo and Gianbattista were too much for him. He desired no repetition of the scene which had passed, and he thought the best thing to be done was to temporise for a while.

"I am glad you are willing to look into the matter," answered Don Paolo. "I am quite sure you will soon be convinced."

Marzio was silent, and it was evident that the interview was at an end. Don Paolo was tolerably well satisfied, for he had gained at least one point in forcing his brother to examine the question. He remained a moment in his seat, reviewing the situation, and asking himself whether there was anything more to be said. He wished indeed that he could

produce some deeper impression on the artist. It was not enough, from the moral point of view, that Marzio should be made to see the impossibility of his scheme, although it was as much as could be expected. The good man wished with all his heart that Marzio could be softened a little, that he might be made to consider his daughter's feelings, to betray some sign of an affection which seemed wholly dead, to show some more human side of his character. But the situation at present forbade Don Paolo from making any further effort. The presence of Gianbattista, who had suddenly constituted himself the priest's defender, was a constraint. Alone with his brother, Marzio might possibly have exhibited some sensibility, but while the young man who had violently silenced him a few moments earlier was looking on, the chiseller would continue to be angry, and would not forget the humiliation he had suffered. There was nothing more to be done at present, and Don Paolo prepared to take his departure, gathering his cloak around him, and smoothing the felt of his three-cornered hat while he held his green umbrella under his arm.

"Are you going already, Don Paolo?" asked Gianbattista, rising to open the door.

"Yes, I must go. Good-bye, Marzio. Bear me no ill-will for pressing you to be cautious. Good-bye, Tista." He pressed the young man's hand

warmly, as though to thank him for his courageous defence, and then left the workshop. Marzio paid no attention to his departure. When the door was closed, and as Gianbattista was returning to his bench, the artist dropped his modelling tools and faced his apprentice.

"You may go too," he said in a low tone, as though he were choking. "I mean you may go for good. I do not need you any longer."

He felt in his pocket for his purse, opened it, and took out some small notes.

"I give you an hour to take your things from my house," he continued. "There are your wages—you shall not tell the priest that I cheated you."

Gianbattista stood still in the middle of the room while Marzio held out the money to him. A hot flush rose to his young forehead, and he seemed on the point of speaking, but the words did not pass his lips. With a quick step he came forward, took the notes from Marzio's hand, and crumpling them in his fingers, threw them in his face with all his might. Then he turned on his heel, spat on the floor of the room, and went out before Marzio could find words to resent the fresh insult.

The door fell back on the latch and Marzio was alone. He was very pale, and for a moment his features worked angrily. Then a cruel smile passed over his face. He stooped down, picked up the

crumpled notes, counted them, and replaced them in his purse. The economical instinct never forsook him, and he did the thing mechanically. Glancing at the bench his eyes fell on the pointed punch which Gianbattista had taken up in his anger. He felt it carefully, handled it, looked at it, smiled again and put it into his pocket.

"It is not a bad one," he muttered. "How many cherubs' eyes I have made with that thing!"

He turned to the slate and examined the rough model he had made in wax, flat still, and only indicated by vigorous touches, the red material smeared on the black surface all around it by his fingers. There was force in the figure, even in its first state, and there was a strange pathos in the bent head, the only part as yet in high relief. But Marzio looked at it angrily. He turned it to the light, closed his eyes a moment, looked at it again, and then, with an incoherent oath, his long, discoloured hand descended on the model, and, with a heavy pressure and one strong push, flattened out what he had done, and smeared it into a shapeless mass upon the dark stone.

"I shall never do it," he said in a low voice. "They have destroyed my idea."

For some minutes he rested his head in his hand in deep thought. At last he rose and went to a corner of the workshop in which stood a heavily ironed box.

Marzio fumbled in his pocket till he found a key, bright from always being carried about with him, and contrasting oddly with the rusty lock into which he thrust it. It turned with difficulty in his nervous fingers, and he raised the heavy lid. The coffer was full of packages wrapped in brown paper. He removed one after another till he came to a wooden case which filled the whole length and breadth of the safe. He lifted it out carefully and laid it on the end of the bench. The cover was fastened down by screws, and he undid them one by one until it moved and came off in his hands. The contents were wrapped carefully in a fine towel, which had once been white, but which had long grown yellow with age. Marzio unfolded the covering with a delicate touch as though he feared to hurt what was within. He took out a large silver crucifix, raising it carefully, and taking care not to touch the figure. He stood it upon the bench before him, and sat down to examine it.

It was a work of rare beauty, which he had made more than ten years before. With the strange reticent instinct which artists sometimes feel about their finest works, he had finished it in secret, working at night alone, and when it was done he had put it away. It was his greatest feat, he had said to himself, and, as from time to time he took it out and looked at it, he gradually grew less and less inclined

to show it to any one, resolving to leave it in its case, until it should be found after his death. It had seemed priceless to him, and he would not sell it. With a fantastic eccentricity of reasoning he regarded it as a sacred thing, to part with which would be a desecration. So he kept it. Then, taking it out again, it had seemed less good to him, as his mind became occupied with other things, and he had fancied he should do better yet. At last he screwed it up in a wooden case and put it at the bottom of his strong box, resolving never to look at it again. Many years had passed since he had laid eyes upon it.

The idea which had come to him when Paolo had communicated the order to him on the previous evening, had seemed absolutely new. It had appeared to him as a glorification of the work he had executed in secret so long ago. Time, and the habit of dissatisfaction had effaced from his mind the precise image of the work of the past, and the emotions of the present had seemed something new to him. He had drawn and modelled during many hours, and yet he was utterly disappointed with the new result. He felt the innate consciousness of having done it before, and of having done it better.

And now the wonderful masterpiece of his earlier years stood before him—the tall and massive ebony cross, bearing the marvellous figure of the dead

Saviour. A ray of sunlight fell through the grated window upon the dying head, illuminating the points of the thorns in the crown, the falling locks of hair, the tortured hands, and casting a shadow of death beneath the half-closed eyes.

For several minutes Marzio sat motionless on his stool, realising the whole strength and beauty of what he had done ten years before. Then he wanted to get a better view of it. It was not high enough above him, for it was meant to stand upon an altar. He could not see the face. He looked about for something upon which to make it stand, but nothing was near. He pushed away his stool, and turning the cross a little, so that the sunlight should strike it at a better angle, he kneeled down on the floor, his hands resting on the edge of the bench, and he looked up at the image of the dead Christ.

CHAPTER VII

When Don Paolo left the workshop, he immediately crossed over and entered the street door of Marzio's house, intending to tell Maria Luisa and Lucia the result of the interview. He had not got to the top of the first flight of stairs when he heard Gianbattista's step behind him, and turning he saw the young man's angry face.

"What is the matter, Tista?" asked the priest, stopping on the steps and laying his hand on the iron railing.

"I am discharged, turned out, insulted by that animal!" answered the apprentice hotly. "He is like a piece of wood! You might as well talk to a wall! You had only just closed the door when he pulled out his purse, counted my wages, and told me to take my things from his house in an hour. I threw the money in his face—the beast!"

"Hush, Tista," said Don Paolo. "Do not be angry—we will arrange it all before night. He cannot do without you, and after all it is my fault.

Calm yourself, Tista, my boy—we will soon set that straight."

"Yes—in an hour I will have left the house. Then it will be straight enough, as you call it. Oh! I would like to strangle him! Dear Don Paolo, nobody but you can arrange this affair——"

"Hush, hush, Tista. I cannot hear you talk in this way. Come, we will go back to Marzio. He will listen to reason——"

"Do you know what he said to me not a quarter of an hour before you came in?" asked Gianbattista quickly, laying his hand on the priest's arm. "He said I might have Lucia and welcome if I would kill you! Do you understand? I wish you could have seen the look in his eyes!"

"No, no, my boy—he was angry. He did not mean it."

"Mean it! Bacchus! He would kill you himself if he were not such a dastardly coward!"

Don Paolo shook his head with an incredulous smile, and looked kindly into the young man's eyes.

"You have all lost your heads over this unfortunate affair, Tista. You are all talking of killing each other and yourselves as though it were as simple as 'good-morning.' It is very wrong to talk of such things, and besides, you know, it is not really worth while——"

"It seems simple enough to me," answered the young man, frowning and clenching his hand.

"Come with me," urged the other, making as though he would descend the steps. "Come back to the workshop, and we will talk it all over."

"Wait a minute, Don Paolo. There is one thing —one favour I want to ask of you." Gianbattista lowered his voice. "You can do it for us—I am sure you will. I will call Lucia, and we will go with you——"

"Where?" asked the priest, not understanding the look of the young man.

"To church, of course. You can marry us in ten minutes, and the thing will be all over. Then we can laugh at Sor Marzio."

Don Paolo smiled.

"My dear boy," he answered, "those things are not done in a moment like roasting chestnuts. There are banns to be published. There is a civil marriage at the Capitol——"

"I should be quite satisfied with your benediction —a *Pater Noster,* an *Oremus* properly said—eh? Would it not be all right?"

"Really, Tista!" exclaimed the good man, holding up his hands in horror. "I had no idea that your religious education had been so neglected! My dear child, marriage is a very solemn thing."

"By Diana! I should think so! But that need

not make it such a long ceremony. A man dies in a moment—*paff!*—the light is out!—you are dead. It is very solemn. The same thing for marriage. The priest looks at you, says *Oremus—paff!* You are married, and it cannot be undone! I know it is very serious, but it is only the affair of a moment."

Don Paolo did not know whether to laugh or to look grave at this exposition of Gianbattista's views of death and matrimony. He put it down to the boy's excitement.

"There is another reason, Tista. The law does not allow a girl of seventeen to be married without her father's consent."

"The law again!" exclaimed Gianbattista in disgust. "I thought the law protected Lucia from her father. You said so last night, and you repeated it this morning."

"Certainly, my boy. But the law also protects parents against any rashness their children may meditate. It would be no marriage if Lucia had not Marzio's consent."

"I wish there were no laws," grumbled the young man. "How do you come to know so much about marriage, Don Paolo?"

"It is my profession. Come along; we will talk to Marzio."

"What can we say to him? You do not suppose I will go and beg to be taken back?"

"You must be forgiving——"

"I believe in forgiveness when the other side begins," said Gianbattista.

"Perhaps Marzio will forgive too," argued the priest.

"He has nothing to forgive," answered the young man. The reasoning seemed to him beyond refutation.

"But if he says he has no objection, if he begs you to come back, I think you might make some advance on your side, Tista. Besides, you were very rough with him this morning."

"He turned me out like a dog—after all these years," said Gianbattista. "I will go back and work for him on one condition. He must give me Lucia at once."

"I am afraid that as a basis of negotiations that plan leaves much to be desired," replied Don Paolo, in a meditative tone. "Of course, we are all determined that you shall marry her in the end; but unless Providence is pleased to change Marzio's state of mind, you may have to wait until she is of age. He will never consent at present."

"In that case I had better go and take my things away from his house," returned the apprentice.

"And say good-bye to Lucia—for a day or two," he added in a low voice.

"Of course, if you will not agree to be conciliatory it is of no use for you to come with me," said Don Paolo rather sadly. "Dear me! Here comes Maria Luisa with Suntarella!"

"Ah, dear Paolo, dear Paolo!" cried the stout lady, puffing up the stairs with the old woman close behind her. "How good you are! And what did he say? We asked if you had gone at the workshop, and they said you had, so Lucia went in to ask her father whether he would have the chickens boiled or roasted. Well, well, tell me all about it. These stairs! Suntarella, run up and open the door while I get my breath! Dear Paolo, you are an angel of goodness!"

"Softly, Maria Luisa," answered the priest. "There is good and bad. He has admitted that he will have to consider the matter because he cannot make Lucia marry without her consent. But on the other hand—poor Tista——" he looked at the young man and hesitated.

"He has turned me out," said Gianbattista. "He has given me an hour to leave his house. I believe a good part of the hour has passed already——"

"And Tista says he will not go back at any price," put in Don Paolo. The Signora Pandolfi gasped for breath.

"Oh! oh! I shall faint!" she sobbed, pressing the handle of her parasol against her breast with both hands. "Oh, what shall we do? We are lost! Paolo, your arm—I shall die!"

"Courage, courage, Maria Luisa," said the priest kindly. "We will find a remedy. For the present Tista can come to my house. There is the little room where the man-servant sleeps, who is gone to see his sick wife in the country. The Cardinal will not mind."

"But you are not going like this?" cried the stout lady, grasping Gianbattista's arm and looking into his face with an expression of forlorn bewilderment. "You cannot go to-day—it is impossible, Tista—your shirts are not even ironed! Oh dear! oh dear! And I had anticipated a feast because I was sure that Marzio would see reason before mid-day, and there are chickens for dinner—with rice, Tista, just as you like them—oh, you cannot go, Tista, I cannot let you go!"

"Courage, Maria Luisa," exhorted Don Paolo. "It is not a question of chickens."

"Dear Sora Luisa, you are too good," said Gianbattista. "Let us go upstairs first, to begin with—you will catch cold here on the steps. Come, come, courage, Sora Luisa!"

He took the good woman's arm and led her upwards. But Don Paolo stayed behind. He believed

it to be his duty to return to the workshop, and to try and undo the harm Gianbattista had done himself by the part he had played in the proceedings of the morning. The Signora Pandolfi suffered herself to be led upstairs, panting and sobbing as she went, and protesting still that Gianbattista could not possibly be allowed to leave the house.

When Don Paolo had parted from the two women an hour earlier, they had not gone home as he had supposed, but, chancing to meet old Assunta near the house, the three had gone together to make certain necessary purchases. On their return they had inquired for Paolo at the workshop, as Maria Luisa had explained, and Lucia had entered in the confident expectation of finding that the position of things had mended considerably since the early morning. Moreover, since the announcement of the previous evening, the young girl had not seen her father alone. She wanted to talk to him on her own account, in order to sound the depths of his determination. She was not afraid of him. The fact that for a long time he had regarded favourably the project of her marriage with Gianbattista had given her a confidence which was not to be destroyed in a moment, even by Marzio's strange conduct. She passed through the outer rooms, nodding to the workmen, who touched their caps to the master's daughter. A little passage separated the large work-

shop from the inner studio. The door at the end was not quite closed. Lucia went up to it, and looked through the opening to see whether Gianbattista were with her father. The sight she saw was so surprising that she leaned against the door-post for support. She could not believe her eyes.

There was her father in his woollen blouse, kneeling, on the brick floor of the room, before a crucifix, his back turned towards her, his hands raised, and, as it seemed from the position of the arms, folded in prayer. The sunlight fell upon the silver figure, and upon the dark tangled hair of the artist who remained motionless as though absorbed in devotion, while his daughter watched him through the half-open door. The scene was one which would have struck any one; the impression it made on Lucia was altogether extraordinary. She easily fancied that Marzio, after his interview with Don Paolo, had felt a great and sudden revulsion of sentiment. She knew that the priest had not left the studio many minutes before, and she saw her father apparently praying before a crucifix. A wonderful conversion had been effected, and the result was there manifest to the girl's eyes.

She held her breath and remained at the door, determined not to move until Marzio should have risen from his knees. To interrupt him at such a moment would have been almost a sacrilege; it might

produce the most fatal results; it would be an intrusion upon the privacy of a repentant man. She stood watching and waiting to see what would happen.

Presently Marzio moved. Lucia thought he was going to rise from his knees, but she was surprised to see that he only changed the position of the crucifix with one hand. He approached his head so near the lower part of it that Lucia fancied he was in the act of pressing his lips upon the crossed feet of the silver Christ. Then he drew back a little, turned his head to one side, and touched the figure with his right hand. It was evident, now, that he was no longer praying, but that something about the workmanship had attracted his attention.

How natural, the girl said to herself, that this man, even in such a supreme moment, should not forget his art—that, even in prayer, his eyes should mechanically detect an error of the chisel, a flaw in the metal, or some such detail familiar to his daily life. She did not think the worse of him for it. He was an artist! The habit of his whole existence could not cease to influence him—he could as soon have ceased to breathe. Lucia watched him and felt something like love for her father. Her sympathy was with him in both actions; in his silent prayer, in the inner privacy of his working-room, as well as in the inherent love of his art, from which he could

not escape even when he was doing something contrary to the whole tenor of his life. Lucia thought how Don Paolo's face would light up when she should tell him of what she had seen. Then she wondered, with a delicate sense of respect for her father's secret feelings, whether she would have the right to tell any one what she had accidentally seen through the half-closed door of the studio.

Marzio moved again, and this time he rose to his feet and remained standing, so that the crucifix was completely hidden from her view. She knocked at the door. Her father turned suddenly round, and faced the entrance, still hiding the crucifix by his figure.

"Who is it?" he asked in a tone that sounded as though he were startled.

"Lucia," answered the girl timidly. "May I come in, papa?"

"Wait a minute," he answered. She drew back and, still watching him, saw that he laid the cross down upon the table, and covered it with a towel—the same one in which it had been wrapped.

"Come in," he called out. "What is the matter?"

"I only came for a moment, papa," answered Lucia, entering the room and glancing about her as she came forward. "Mamma sent me in to ask you about the chickens—there are chickens for dinner—

she wanted to know whether you would like them roasted or boiled with rice."

"Roasted," replied Marzio, taking up a chisel and pretending to be busy. "It is Gianbattista who likes them boiled."

"Thank you, I will go home and tell her. Papa ——" the girl hesitated.

"What is the matter?"

"Papa, you are not angry any more as you were last night?"

"Angry? No. What makes you ask such a question? I was not angry last night, and I am not angry now. Who put the idea into your head?"

"I am so glad," answered Lucia. "Not with me, not with Tista? I am so glad! Where is Tista, papa?"

"I have not the slightest idea. You will probably not see Tista any more, nor Gianbattista, nor his excellency the Signorino Bordogni."

Lucia turned suddenly pale, and rested her hand upon the old straw chair on which Don Paolo had sat during his visit.

"What is this? What do you tell me? Not see Tista?" she asked quickly.

"Gianbattista had the bad taste to attack me this morning—here—in my own studio," said Marzio, turning round and facing his daughter. "He put his hands upon my face, do you understand? He would

have stabbed me with a chisel if Paolo had not interfered. Do you understand that? Out of deference for your affections I did not kill him, as I might have done. I dismissed him from my service, and gave him an hour to take his effects out of my house. Is that clear? I offered him his money. He threw it in my face and spat at me as he went out. Is that enough? If I find him at home when I come to dinner I will have him turned out by the police. You see, you are not likely to set eyes on him for a day or two. You may go home and tell your mother the news, if she has not heard it already. It will be sauce for her chickens."

Lucia leaned upon the chair during this speech, her black eyes growing wider and wider, and her face turning whiter at every word. To her it seemed, in this first moment, like a hopeless separation from the man she loved. With a sudden movement she sprang forward, and fell on her knees at Marzio's feet.

"Oh, my father, I beseech you, in the name of heaven," she cried wildly.

"It is not of the slightest use," answered Marzio, drawing back. Lucia knelt for one moment before him, with upturned face, an expression of imploring despair on her features. Then she sank down in a heap upon the floor against the three-legged stool, which tottered, lost its balance under her weight,

and fell over upon the bricks with a loud crash. The poor girl had fainted away.

Marzio was startled by the sight and the sound, and then, seeing what had happened, he was very much frightened. He knelt down beside his daughter's prostrate body and bent over her face. He raised her up in his long, nervous arms, and lifted her to the old chair till she sat upon it, and he supported her head and body, kneeling on the floor beside her. A sharp pain shot through his heart, the faint indication of a love not wholly extinguished.

"Lucia, dear Lucia!" he said, in a voice so tender that it sounded strangely in his own ears. But the girl gave no sign. Her head would have fallen forward if he had not supported it with his hands.

"My daughter! Little Lucia! You are not dead —tell me you are not dead!" he cried. In his fright and sudden affection he pressed his lips to her face, kissing her again and again. "I did not mean to hurt you, darling child," he repeated, as though she could hear him speak.

At last her eyes opened. A shiver ran through her body and she raised her head. She was very pale as she leaned back in the chair. Marzio took her hands and rubbed them between his dark fingers, still looking into her eyes.

"Ah!" she gasped, "I thought I was dead."

Then, as Marzio seemed about to speak, she added faintly: "Don't say it again!"

"Lucia—dear Lucia! I knew you were not dead. I knew you would come back to me," he said, still in very tender tones. "Forgive me, child—I did not mean to hurt you."

"No? Oh, papa! Then why did you say it?" she cried, suddenly bursting into tears and weeping upon his shoulder. "Tell me it is not true—tell me so!" she sobbed.

Marzio was almost as much disconcerted by Lucia's return to consciousness as he had been by her fainting away. His nature had unbent, momentarily, under the influence of his strong fear for his daughter's life. Now that she had recovered so quickly, he remembered Gianbattista's violence and scornful words, and he seemed to feel the young man's strong hand upon his mouth, stifling his speech. He hesitated, rose to his feet, and began to pace the floor. Lucia watched him with intense anxiety. There was a conflict in his mind between the resentment which was not half an hour old, and the love for his child, which had been so quickly roused during the last five minutes.

"Well—Lucia, my dear—I do not know——" he stopped short in his walk and looked at her. She leaned forward as though to catch his words.

"Do you think you could not—that you would be

so very unhappy, I mean, if he lived out of the house —I mean to say, if he had lodgings, somewhere, and came back to work?"

"Oh, papa—I should faint away again—and I should die. I am quite sure of it."

Marzio looked anxiously at her, as though he expected to see her fall to the ground a second time. It went against the grain of his nature to take Gianbattista back, although he had discharged him hastily in the anger of the moment. He turned away and glanced at the bench. There were the young man's tools, the hammer as he had left it, the piece of work on the leathern pad. The old impulse of foresight for the future acted in Marzio's mind. He could never find such another workman. In the uncertainty of the moment, as often happens, details rose to his remembrance and produced their effect. He recollected the particular way in which Gianbattista used to hold the blunt chisel in first tracing over the drawing on a silver plate. He had never seen any one do it in the same way.

"Well, Lucia—don't faint away. If you can make him stay, I will take him back. But I am afraid you will have hard work. He will make difficulties. He threw the money in my face, Lucia—in your father's face, girl! Think of that. Well, well, do what you like. He is a good workman. Go away, child, and leave me to myself. What will you say to him?"

Lucia threw her arms round her father's neck and kissed him in her sudden joy. Then she stood a moment in thought.

"Give me his money," she said. "If he will take the money he will come back."

Marzio hesitated, slowly drew out his purse, and began to take out the notes.

"Well—if you will have it so," he grumbled. "After all, as he threw it away, I do not see that he has much right to it. There it is. If he says anything about that ten-franc note being torn, tell him he tore it himself. Go home, Lucia, and manage things as you can."

Lucia put the money in her glove, and busied herself for a moment in brushing the dust from her clothes. Mechanically, her father helped her.

"You are quite sure you did not hurt yourself?" he asked. The whole occurrence seemed indistinct, as though some one had told something which he had not understood—as we sometimes listen to a person reading aloud, and, missing by inattention the verb of the sentence, remain confused, and ask ourselves what the words mean.

"No—not at all. It is nothing," answered Lucia, and in a moment she was at the door.

Opening it to go out, she saw the tall figure of Don Paolo at the other end of the passage coming rapidly towards her. She raised her finger to her lips and

nodded, as though to explain that everything was settled, and that the priest should not speak to Marzio. She, of course, did not know that he had been talking with Gianbattista and her mother, nor that he knew anything about the apprentice's dismissal. She only feared fresh trouble, now that the prospect looked so much clearer, in case Don Paolo should again attack her father upon the subject of the marriage. But her uncle came forward and made as though he would enter the workshop.

"It is all settled," she said quietly. Don Paolo looked at her in astonishment. At that moment Marzio caught sight of him over the girl's shoulder, in the dusky entrance.

"Come in, Paolo," he called out. "I have something to show you. Go home, Lucia, my child."

Not knowing what to expect, and marvelling at the softened tone of his brother's voice, Don Paolo entered the room, waited till Lucia was out of the passage, and then closed the door behind him. He stood in the middle of the floor, grasping his umbrella in his hand and wondering upon what new phase the business was entering.

"I have something to show you," Marzio repeated, as though to check any question which the priest might be going to put to him. "You asked me for a crucifix last night. I have one here. Will it do? Look at it."

While speaking, Marzio had uncovered the cross and lifted it up, so that it stood on the bench where he had at first placed it to examine it himself. Then he stepped back and made way for Don Paolo. The priest stood for a moment speechless before the masterpiece, erect, his hands folded before him. Then, as though recollecting himself, he took off his hat, which he had forgotten to remove on entering the workshop.

"What a miracle!" he exclaimed, in a low voice.

Marzio stood a little behind him, his hands in the pockets of his woollen blouse. A long silence followed. Don Paolo could not find words to express his admiration, and his wonder was mixed with a profound feeling of devotion. The amazing reality of the figure, clothed at the same time in a sort of divine glory, impressed itself upon him as he gazed, and roused that mystical train of religious contemplation which is both familiar and dear to devout persons. He lost himself in his thoughts, and his refined features showed as in a mirror the current of his meditation. The agony of the Saviour of mankind was renewed before him, culminating in the sacrifice upon the cross. Involuntarily Paolo bent his head and repeated in low tones the words of the Creed, "*Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis,*" and then, "*Crucifixus etiam pro nobis.*"

Marzio stood looking on, his hands in his pockets. His fingers grasped the long sharp punch he had taken from the table after Gianbattista's departure. His eyes fixed themselves upon the smooth tonsure at the back of Paolo's head, and slowly his right hand issued from his pocket with the sharp instrument firmly clenched in it. He raised it to the level of his head, just above that smooth shaven circle in the dark hair. His eyes dilated and his mouth worked nervously as the pale lips stretched themselves across the yellow teeth.

Don Paolo moved, and turned to speak to his brother concerning the work of art. Seeing Marzio's attitude, he started with a short cry and stretched out his arm as though to parry a blow.

"Marzio!"

The artist had quickly brought his hand to his forehead, and the ghastly affectation of a smile wreathed about his white lips. His voice was thick.

"I was only shading my eyes from the sun. Don't you see how it dazzles me, reflected from the silver? What did you imagine, Paolo? You look frightened."

"Oh, nothing," answered the priest bravely. "Perhaps I am a little nervous to-day."

"Bacchus! It looks like it," said Marzio, with

an attempt to laugh. Then he tossed the tool upon the table among the rest with an impatient gesture. "What do you think of the crucifix?"

"It is very wonderful," said Paolo, controlling himself by an effort. "When did you make it, Marzio? You have not had time——"

"I made it years ago," answered the chiseller, turning his face away to hide his pallor. "I made it for myself. I never meant to show it, but I believe I cannot do anything better. Will it do for your cardinal? Look at the work. It is as fine as anything of the kind in the world, though I say it. Yes—it is cast. Of course, you do not understand the art, Paolo, but I will explain it all to you in a few minutes——"

Marzio talked very fast, almost incoherently, and he was evidently struggling with an emotion. Paolo, standing back a little from the bench, nodded his head from time to time.

"It is all very simple," continued the artist, as though he dared not pause for breath. "You see one sometimes makes little figures of real *repoussé*, half and half, done in cement and then soldered together so that they look like one piece, but it is impossible to do them well unless you have dies to press the plate into the first shape—and the die always makes the same figure, though you can vary

the face and twist the arms and legs about. Cheap silver crucifixes and angels and those things are all made in that way, and with care a great deal can be done, of course, to give them an artistic look."

"Of course," assented Don Paolo, in a low voice. He thought he understood the cause of his brother's eloquence.

"Yes, of course," continued Marzio, as rapidly as before. "But to make a really good thing like this, is a different matter. A very different matter. Here you just model your figure in wax, and make moulds of the parts of it, and chisel each part separately, copying the model. And then you must join all the parts together with silver-soldering, and go over the lines carefully. It needs the most delicate handling, for although the casting is very heavy it is not like working on a chalice that is filled with cement and all arranged for you, that can be put in the fire, melted out, softened, cooled, and worked over as often as you please. There is no putting in the fire here—not more than once after you have joined the pieces. Do you understand me? Why do you look at me in that way, Paolo? You look as though you did not follow me."

"On the contrary," said the priest, "I think I understand it very well—as well as an outsider can

understand such a process. No—I merely look at the finished work. It is superb, Marzio—magnificent! I have never seen anything like it."

"Well, you may have it to-night," said Marzio, turning away, and walking about the room. "I will touch it over. I can improve it a little. I have learned something in ten years. I will work all to-day, and I will bring it home this evening to show Maria Luisa. Then you may take it away."

"And the price? I must be able to tell the Cardinal."

"Oh, never mind the price. I will be content to take whatever he gives me, since it is going. No price would represent the labour. Indeed, Paolo, if it were any one but you, I would not let it go. Nothing but my affection for you would make me give it to you. It is the gem of my studio. Ah, how I worked at it ten years ago!"

"Thank you. I think I understand," answered the priest. "I am very much obliged to you, Marzio, and I assure you it will be appreciated. I must be going. Thank you for showing it to me. I will come and get it to-night."

"Well, good-bye, Paolo," said Marzio. "Here is your umbrella."

As Don Paolo turned away to leave the room, the artist looked curiously at the tonsure on his head and his eyes followed it until Paolo had covered it with his hat. Then he closed the door and went back to the bench.

CHAPTER VIII

Lucia hastened homewards with the good news she bore. Her young nature was elastic, and, in the sudden happiness of having secured Gianbattista's recall, she quickly recovered from the shock she had received. She did not reflect very much, for she had not the time. It had all happened so quickly that her senses were confused, and she only knew that the man she loved must be in despair, and that the sooner she reached him the sooner she would be able to relieve him from what he must be suffering. Her breath came fast as she reached the top of the stairs, and she panted as she rang the bell of the lodging. Apparently she had rung so loud in her excitement as to arouse the suspicions of old Assunta, who cautiously peered through the little square that opened behind a grating in the door, before she raised the latch. On seeing Lucia she began to laugh, and opened quickly.

"So loud!" chuckled the old thing. "I thought it was the police or Sor Marzio in a rage."

Lucia did not heed her, but ran quickly on to the sitting-room, where the Signora Pandolfi was alone, seated on her straight chair and holding her bonnet in her hand, the bonnet with the purple glass grapes; she was the picture of despair. Lucia made haste to comfort her.

"Do not cry, mamma," she said quickly. "I have arranged it all. I have seen papa. I have brought Tista's money. Papa wants him to stay after all. Yes—I know you cannot guess how it all happened. I went in to ask about the chickens, and then I asked about Tista, and he told me that I should not see him any more, and then—then I felt this passion—here in the chest, and everything went round and round and round like a whirligig at the Termini, and I fell right down, mamma, down upon the bricks—I know, my frock is all dusty still, here, look, and here, but what does it matter? Patience! I fell down like a sack of flour—*pata tunfate!*"

"T-t-t-t!" exclaimed the Signora Pandolfi, holding up her hands and drawing in her breath as she clacked her tongue against the roof of her mouth. "T-t-t-t! What a pity!"

"And when I came to my senses—I had fainted, you understand—I was sitting on the old straw chair and papa was holding my hands in his and calling me his angel! *Capperi!* But it was worth while.

You can imagine the situation when he called me an angel! It is the first time I have ever fainted, mamma—you have no idea—it was so curious!"

"Ah, my dear, it must have softened his heart!" cried Maria Luisa. "If I could only faint away like that once in a while! Who knows? He might be converted. But what would you have?" The signora glanced down sadly at her figure, which certainly suggested no such weakness as she seemed to desire. "Well, Lucia," she continued, "and then?"

"Yes, I talked to him, I implored him, I told him I should probably faint again, and, indeed, I felt like it. So he said I might have my way, and he told me to come home and tell Tista at once. Where is Tista?"

"Eh! He is in his room, packing up his things. I will go and call him. Oh dear! What a wonderful day this is, my child! To think that it is not yet eleven o'clock, and all that has happened! It is enough to make a woman crazy, fit to send to Santo Spirito. First you are to be married, and then you are not to be married! Then Gianbattista is sent away—after all these years, and such a good boy! And then he is taken back! And then—but the chickens, Lucia, you forgot to ask about the chickens——"

"Not a bit of it," answered the young girl. "I

asked first, before he told me. Afterwards, I don't know—I should not have had the strength to speak of chickens. He said roasted, mamma. Poor Tista! He likes them with rice. Well, one cannot have everything in this world!"

The Signora Pandolfi had reached the door, and called out at the top of her voice to the young man.

"Tista! Tista!" She could have been heard in the street.

"Eh, Sora Luisa! We are not in the Piazza Navona," said Gianbattista, appearing at the door of his little room. "What has happened?"

"Go and talk to Lucia," answered the good lady, hurrying off in search of Assunta to tell her the decision concerning the dinner.

Gianbattista entered the sitting-room, and, from the young girl's radiant expression, he guessed that some favourable change had taken place in his position, or in the positions of them both. Lucia began to tell him what had passed, and gave much the same account as she had given to her mother, though some of the intonations were softer, and accompanied by looks which told her happiness. When she had explained the situation she paused for an answer. Gianbattista stood beside her and held her hand, but he looked out of the window, as though uncertain what to say.

"Here is the money," said Lucia. "You will take

it, won't you? Then it will be all settled. What is the matter, Tista? Are you not glad?"

"I do not trust him," answered the young man. "It is not like him to change his mind like that, all in a minute. He means some mischief."

"What can he do?"

"I do not know. I feel as if some evil were coming. Patience! Who knows? You are an angel, Lucia, darling."

"Everybody is telling me so to-day," answered the young girl. "Papa, you——"

"Of course. It is quite true, my heart, and so every one repeats it. What do you think? Will he come home to dinner? It is only eleven o'clock—perhaps I ought to go back and work at the ewer. Somehow I do not want to see him just now——"

"Stay with me, Tista. Besides, you were packing up your belongings to go away. You have a right to take an hour to unpack them. Tell me, what is this idea you have that papa is not in earnest? I want to understand it. He was quite in earnest just now—so good, so good, like sugar! Is it because you are still angry with him, that you do not want to see him?"

"No—why should I still be angry? He has made reparation. After all, I took a certain liberty with him."

"That is all the more reason. If he is willing to

forget it—but I could tell you something, Tista, something that would persuade you."

"What is it, my treasure?" asked Gianbattista with a smile, bending down to look into her eyes.

"Oh, something very wonderful, something of which you would never dream. I could scarcely believe my eyes. Imagine, when I went to find him just now, the door was open. I looked through before I went in, to see if you were there. Do you know what papa was doing? He was kneeling on the floor before a beautiful crucifix, such a beautiful one. I think he was saying prayers, but I could not see his face. He stayed a long time, and when I knocked he covered it up, was not that strange? That is the reason why I persuaded him so easily to change his mind."

Gianbattista smiled incredulously. He had often seen Marzio kneel on the floor to get a different view of a large piece of work.

"He was only looking at the work," he answered. "I have seen him do it very often. He would laugh if he could hear you, Lucia. Do you imagine he is such a man as that? Perhaps it would not do him any harm—a little praying. But it is a kind of medicine he does not relish. No, Lucia, you have been deceived, believe me."

The girl's expression changed. She had quite persuaded herself that a great moral change had taken

place in her father that morning, and had built many hopes upon it. To her sanguine imagination it seemed as though his whole nature must have changed. She had seen visions of him as she had always wished he might be, and the visions had seemed likely to be realised. She had doubted whether she should tell any one of the story of what she regarded as Marzio's conversion, but she had made an exception in favour of Gianbattista. Gianbattista simply laughed, and explained the matter away in half a dozen words. Lucia was more deeply disappointed than any one, listening to her light talk, could have believed possible. Her face expressed the pain she felt, and she protested against the apprentice's explanation.

"It is too bad of you, Tista," she said in hurt tones. "But I do not think you are right. You have no idea how quietly he knelt, and his hands were folded on the bench. He bent his head once, and I believe he kissed the feet—I wish you could have seen it, you would not doubt me. You think I have invented a silly tale, I am sure you do."

The tears filled her eyes as she turned away and stared vacantly out of the window at the dark houses opposite. The sun, which had been shining until that moment, disappeared behind a mass of driving clouds, and a few drops of rain began to beat against

the panes of glass. The world seemed suddenly more dreary to Lucia. Gianbattista, who was sensitive where she was concerned, looked at her, and understood that he had destroyed something in which she had wished to believe."

"Well, well, my heart, perhaps you are right," he said softly, putting his arm round her.

"No, you do not believe it," she answered.

"For you, I will believe in anything, in everything—even in Sor Marzio's devotions," he said, pressing her to his side. "Only—you see, darling, he was talking in such a way a few moments before—that it seemed impossible——"

"Nothing is quite impossible," replied Lucia. "The heart beats fast. There may be a whole world between one beat and the next."

"Yes, my love," assented Gianbattista, looking tenderly into her eyes. "But do you think that between all the beatings of our two hearts there could ever be a world of change?"

"Ah—that is different, Tista. Why should we change? We could only change for worse if we began to love each other less, and that is impossible. But papa! Why should he not change for the better? Who can tell, Tista, dear, that in a moment, in a second, after you were gone, he was not sorry for all he had done? He may have been in an instant. Why not?"

"Things done so very quickly are not done well," answered the young man. "I know that from my art. You may stamp a thing in a moment with the die—it is rough, unfinished. It takes weeks to chisel it——"

"The good God is not a chiseller, Tista."

The words fell very simply from the young girl's lips, and the expression of her face did not change. Only the tone of her voice was grave and quiet, and there was a depth of conviction in it which struck Gianbattista forcibly. In a short sentence she had defined the difference between his mode of thought and her own. To her mind omnipotence was a reality. To him, it was an inconceivable power, the absurdity of which he sought to demonstrate by comparing the magnitude claimed for it with the capacities of man. He remained silent for a moment, as though seeking an answer. He found none, and what he said expressed an aspiration and not a retort.

"I sometimes wish that I could believe as you do," he said. "I am sure I could do much greater things, make much more beautiful angels, if I were quite sure that they existed."

"Of course you could," answered Lucia. Then, with a tact beyond her years, she changed the subject of their talk. She would not endanger the durability of his aspiration by discussing it. "To

go back to what we were speaking of," she said, "you will go to the workshop this afternoon, Tista, won't you?"

"Yes," he said mechanically. "What else should I do? Oh, Lucia, my darling, I cannot bear this uncertainty," he cried, suddenly giving vent to his feelings. "Where will it end? He may have changed, he may be all you say he is to-day, all that he was not yesterday, but do you really believe he has given up his wild idea? It is not all as it should be, and that is not his nature. It will come upon us suddenly with something we do not expect. He will do something—I cannot tell what, but I know him better than you do. He is cruel, he plots over his work, and then, when all seems calm, the storm breaks. It will not end well."

"We must love each other, Tista. Then all will end well. Who can divide us?"

"No one," answered the young man firmly. "But many things may happen before we are united for ever."

He was not subject to presentiments, and his self-confident nature abhorred the prospect of trouble. He had arrived at his conclusion by a logical process, and there seemed no escape from it. As he had told Lucia, he knew the character of the chiseller better than the women of the household could know it, for he had been his constant companion for years,

and was not to be deceived in his estimate of Marzio's temper. A man's natural disposition shows itself most clearly when he is in his natural element, at his work, busied in the ordinary occupations of life. To such a man as Marzio, the workshop is more sympathetic than the house. Disagreeing on most points with his family, obliged to be absent during the whole day, wholly absorbed in the production of works which the women of his household could not thoroughly appreciate, because they did not thoroughly understand the ideas which originated them, nor the methods employed in their execution —under these combined circumstances it was to be expected that the artist's real feelings would find expression at the work-bench rather than in the society of his wife and daughter. Seated by Marzio's side, and learning from him all that could be learned, Gianbattista had acquired at the same time a thorough knowledge of his instincts and emotions, which neither Maria Luisa nor Lucia was able to comprehend.

Marzio was tenacious of his ideas and of his schemes. Deficient in power of initiative and in physical courage, he was obstinate beyond all belief in his adherence to his theories. That he should suddenly yield to a devotional impulse, fall upon his knees before a crucifix and cry *meâ culpâ* over his whole past life, was altogether out of the question.

In Gianbattista's opinion it was almost as impossible that he should abandon in a moment the plan which he had announced with so much resolution on the previous evening. It was certain that before declaring his determination to marry his daughter to the lawyer he must have ruminated and planned during many days, as it was his habit to do in all the matters of his life, without consulting any one, or giving the slightest hint of his intention. Some part of his remarkable talent depended upon this faculty of thoroughly considering a resolution before proceeding to carry it out; and it is a part of every really great talent in every branch of creative art, for it is the result of a great continuity in the action of the mind combined with the power of concentration and the virtue of reticence. Many a work has appeared to the world to be the spontaneous creation of transcendent genius, which has, in reality, been conceived, studied, and elaborated during years of silence. Reticence, concentration, and continuity, are characteristics which cannot influence one part of a man's life without influencing the rest as well. The habit of studying before proceeding is coexistent with the necessity of considering before acting; and a man who is reticent concerning one half of his thoughts is not communicative about the other half. Nature does not do things by halves, and the nerves which animate the gesture at the table are

the same which guide the chisel at the work-bench. Gianbattista understood Marzio's character, and in his mind tried to construct the future out of the present. He endeavoured to follow out what he supposed to be the chiseller's train of thought to its inevitable conclusion, and the more he reflected on the situation the more certain he became that Lucia's hypothesis was untenable. It was not conceivable, under any circumstances whatever, that Marzio should suddenly turn into a gentle, forgiving creature, anxious only for the welfare of others, and willing to sacrifice his own inclinations and schemes to that laudable end.

At twelve o'clock Marzio appeared, cold, silent, and preoccupied. His manner did not encourage the idea entertained by Lucia, though the girl explained it to herself on the ground that her father was ashamed of having yielded so easily, and was unwilling to have it thought that he was too good-natured. There was truth in her idea, and it showed a good deal of common sense and appreciation of character. But it was not the whole truth. Marzio not only felt humiliated at having suffered himself to be overcome by his daughter's entreaties; he regretted it, and wished he could undo what he had done. It was too late, however. To change his mind a second time would be to show such weakness as his family had never witnessed in his actions.

He ate his food in silence, and the rest of the party ventured but few remarks. They inwardly congratulated themselves upon the favourable issue of the affair, in so far as it could be said to have reached a conclusion, and they all dreaded equally some fresh outburst of anger, should Marzio's temper be ruffled. Gianbattista himself set the example of discretion. As for the Signora Pandolfi, she had ready in her pocket the money her husband had given her in the morning for the purchase of Lucia's outfit, and she hoped at every moment that Marzio would ask for it, which would have been a sign that he had abandoned the idea of the marriage with Carnesecchi. But Marzio never mentioned the subject. He ate as quickly as he could, swallowed a draught of weak wine and water, and rose from the table without a word. With a significant nod to Maria Luisa and Lucia, Gianbattista left his seat and followed the artist towards the door. Marzio looked round sharply as he heard the steps behind him.

"Lucia told me," said the young man simply. "If you wish it, I will come and work."

Marzio hesitated a moment, beating his soft felt hat over his arm to remove the dust.

"You can go with the men and put up the prince's grating," he said at last. "The right hand side is

ready fitted. If you work hard you can finish it before night."

"Very well," answered Gianbattista. "I will see to it. I have the keys here. In five minutes I will come across."

Marzio nodded and went out. Gianbattista returned to the room where the women were finishing their dinner.

"It is all right," he said. "I am to put up the grating this afternoon. Will you come and see it, Sora Luisa?" He spoke to the mother, but he included the daughter by his look.

"It is very far," objected the Signora Pandolfi, "and we have been walking so much this morning. I think this day will never end!"

"Courage, mamma," said Lucia, "it will do you good to walk. Besides, there is the omnibus. What did he say, Tista? Am I not right?"

"Who knows? He is very quiet," replied the apprentice.

"What is it? What are you right about, my heart?" asked Maria Luisa.

"She thinks Sor Marzio has suddenly turned into a sugar doll," answered Gianbattista, with a laugh. "It may be. They say they make sugar out of all sorts of things nowadays."

"*Capperi!* It would be hard!" exclaimed Maria

Luisa. "If there is enough sugar in him to sweeten a teaspoonful of coffee, write to me," she added ironically.

"Well—I shall be at the church in an hour, but it will be time enough if you come at twenty-three o'clock—between twenty-two and twenty-three." This means between one hour and two hours before sunset. "The light is good then, for there is a big west window," added Gianbattista in explanation.

"We will come before that," said Lucia. "Good-bye, Tista, and take care not to catch cold in that damp place."

"And you too," he answered, "cover yourselves carefully."

With this injunction, and a parting wave of the hand, he left the house, affecting a gay humour he did not really feel. His invitation to the two women to join him in the church had another object besides that of showing them the magnificent gilded grating which was to be put in place. Gianbattista feared that Marzio had sent him upon this business for the sake of getting him out of the way, and he did not know what might happen in his absence. The artist might perhaps choose that time for going in search of Gasparo Carnesecchi in order to bring him to the house and precipitate the catastrophe which the apprentice still feared, in spite of the last events

of the morning. It was not unusual for Maria Luisa and her daughter to accompany him and Marzio when a finished work was to be set up, and Gianbattista knew that there could be no reasonable objection to such a proceeding.

With an anxious heart he left the house and crossed the street to the workshop where the men were already waiting for the carts which were to convey the heavy grating to its destination. The pieces were standing against the walls, wrapped in tow and brown paper, and immense parcels lay tied up upon the benches. It was a great piece of work of the decorative kind, but of the sort for which Marzio cared little. Great brass castings were chiselled and finished according to his designs without his touching them with his hands. Huge twining arabesques of solid metal were prepared in pieces and fitted together with screws that ran easily in the thread, and then were taken apart again. Then came the laborious work of gilding them by the mercury process, smearing every piece very carefully with an amalgam of mercury and gold, and putting it into a gentle, steady fire, until the mercury had evaporated, leaving only the dull gold in an even deposit on the surfaces. Then the finishing, the burnishing of the high lights, and the cleaning of the portions which were to remain dull. Sometimes the gilding of a piece failed, and had to be begun

again, and there was endless trouble in saving the gold, as well as in preventing the workmen from stealing the amalgam. It was slow and troublesome work, and Marzio cared little for it though his artistic instinct restrained him from allowing it to leave the workshop until it had been perfected to the highest degree.

At present the artist stood in the outer room among the wrapped pieces, his pipe in his mouth and his hands in his pockets. A moment after Gianbattista had entered, two carts rolled up to the door and the loading began.

"Take the drills and some screws to spare," said Marzio, looking into the bag of tools the foreman had prepared. "One can never tell in these monstrous things."

"It will be the first time, if we have to drill a new hole after you have fitted a piece of work, Maestro Marzio," answered the foreman, who had an unlimited admiration for his master's genius and foresight.

"Never mind; do as I tell you. We may all make mistakes in this world," returned the artist, giving utterance to a moral sentiment which did not influence him beyond the precincts of the workshop. The workman obeyed, and added the requisite instruments to the furnishing of his leather bag.

"And be careful, Tista," added Marzio, turning to

the apprentice. "Look to the sockets in the marble when you place the large pieces. Measure them with your compass, you know; if they are too loose you have the thin plates of brass to pack them; if they are tight, file away, but finish and smooth it well. Don't leave anything rough."

Gianbattista nodded as he lent a helping hand to the workmen who were carrying the heavy pieces to the carts.

"Will you come to the church before night?" he asked.

"Perhaps. I cannot tell. I am very busy."

In ten minutes the pieces were all piled upon the two vehicles, and Gianbattista strode away on foot with the workmen. He had not thought of changing his dress, and had merely thrown an old overcoat over his grey woollen blouse. For the time, he was an artisan at work. When working hours were over, and on Sundays, he loved to put on the stiff high collar and the checked clothes which suggested the garments of the English tourist. He was then a different person, and, in accordance with the change, he would smoke a cigarette and pull his cuffs over his hands, like a real gentleman, adjusting the angle of his hat from time to time, and glancing at his reflection in the shop windows as he passed along. But work was work; it was a pity to spoil good clothes with handling tools and castings, and

jostling against the men, and, moreover, the change affected his nature. He could not handle a hammer or a chisel when he felt like a real gentleman, and when he felt like an artisan he must enjoy the liberty of being able to tuck up his sleeves and work with a will. At the present moment, too, he was proud of being in sole charge of the work, and he could not help thinking what a fine thing it would be to be married to Lucia and to be the master of the workshop. With the sanguine enthusiasm of a very young man who loves his occupation, he put his whole soul into what he was to do, assured that every skilful stroke of the hammer, every difficulty overcome, brought him nearer to the woman he loved.

Marzio entered the inner studio when Gianbattista was gone, leaving a boy who was learning to cut little files—the preliminary to the chiseller's profession—in charge of the outer workshop. The artist shut himself in and bolted the door, glad to be alone with the prospect of not being disturbed during the whole afternoon. He seemed not to hesitate about the work he intended to do, for he immediately took in hand the crucifix, laid it upon the table, and began to study it, using a lens from time to time as he scrutinised each detail. His rough hair fell forward over his forehead, and his shoulders rounded themselves till he looked almost deformed.

He had suffered very strong emotions during the last twenty-four hours—enough to have destroyed the steadiness of an ordinary man's hand; but with Marzio manual skill was the first habit of nature, and it would have been hard to find a mental impression which could shake his physical nerves. His mind, however, worked rapidly and almost fiercely, while his eyes searched the minute lines of the work he was examining.

Uppermost in his thoughts was a confused sense of humiliation and of exasperation against his brother. The anger he felt had nearly been expressed in a murderous deed not more than two or three hours earlier, and the wish to strike was still present in his mind. He twisted his lips into an ugly smile as he recalled the scene in every detail; but the determination was different from the reality and more in accordance with his feelings. He realised again that moment during which he had held the sharp instrument over his brother's head, and the thought which had then passed so rapidly through his brain recurred again with increased clearness. He remembered that beneath the iron-bound box in the corner there was a trap-door which descended to the unused cellar, for his work-shop had in former times been a wine-shop, and he had hired the cellar with it. One sharp blow would have done the business. A few quick movements and

Paolo's body would have been thrown down the dark steps beneath, the trap closed again, the safe replaced in its position. It was eleven o'clock then, or thereabouts. He would have sent the workmen to their dinner, and would have returned to the inner studio. They would have supposed afterwards that Don Paolo had left the place with him. He would have gone home and would have said that Paolo had left him—or, no—he would have said that Paolo had not been there, for some one might have seen him leave the workshop alone. In the night he would have returned, his family thinking he had gone to meet his friends, as he often did. When the streets were quiet he would have carried the body away upon the handcart that stood in the entry of the outer room. It was not far—scarcely three hundred yards, allowing for the turnings—to the place where the Via Montella ends in a mud bank by the dark river. A deserted neighbourhood, too—a turn to the left, the low trees of the Piazza de' Branca, the dark, short, straight street to the water. At one o'clock after midnight who was stirring? It would all have been so simple, so terribly effectual.

And then there would have been no more Paolo, no more domestic annoyances, no more of the priest's smooth-faced disapprobation and perpetual

opposition in the house. He would have soon brought Maria Luisa and Lucia to reason. What could they do without the support of Paolo? They were only women after all. As for Gianbattista, if once the poisonous influence of Paolo were removed —and how surely removed!—Marzio's lips twisted as though he were tasting the sourness of failure, like an acid fruit—if once the priest were gone, Gianbattista would come back to his old ways, to his old scorn of priests in general, of churches, of oppression, of everything that Marzio hated. He might marry Lucia then, and be welcome. After all, he was a finer fellow for the pretty girl than Gasparo Carnesecchi, with his claw fingers and his vinegar salad. That was only a farce, that proposal about the lawyer—the real thing was to get rid of Paolo. There could be no healthy liberty of thought in the house while this fellow was sneaking in and out at all hours. Tumble Paolo into a quiet grave—into the river with a sackful of old castings at his neck —there would be peace then, and freedom. Marzio ground his teeth as he thought how nearly he had done the thing, and how miserably he had failed. It had been the inspiration of the moment, and the details had appeared clear at once to his mind. Going over them he found that he had not been mistaken. If Paolo came again, and he had the

chance, he would do it. It was perhaps all the better that he had found time to weigh the matter.

But would Paolo come again? Would he ever trust himself alone in the workshop? Had he guessed, when he turned so suddenly and saw the weapon in the air that the blow was on the very point of descending? Or had he been deceived by the clumsy excuse Marzio had made about the sun shining in his eyes?

He had remained calm, or Marzio tried to think so. But the artist himself had been so much moved during the minutes that followed that he could hardly feel sure of Paolo's behaviour. It was a chilling thought, that Paolo might have understood and might have gone away feeling that his life had been saved almost by a miracle. He would not come back, the cunning priest, in that case; he would not risk his precious skin in such company. It was not to be expected—a priest was only human, after all, like any other man. Marzio cursed his ill luck again as he bent over his work. What a moment this would be if Paolo would take it into his head to make another visit! Even the men were gone. He would send the one boy who remained to the church where Gianbattista was working, with a message. They would be alone then, he and Paolo. The priest might scream and call for help—the thick walls

would not let any sound through them. It would be even better than in the morning, when he had lost his opportunity by a moment, by the twinkling of an eye.

"They say hell is paved with good intentions—or lost opportunities," muttered Marzio. "I will send Paolo with the next opportunity to help in the paving."

He laughed softly at his grim joke, and bent lower over the crucifix. By this time he had determined what to do, for his reflections had not interfered with his occupation. Removing two tiny silver screws which fitted with the utmost exactness in the threads, he loosened the figure from the cross, removed the latter to a shelf on the wall, and returning laid the statue on a soft leathern pad, surrounding it with sand-bags till it was propped securely in the position he required. Then he took a very small chisel, adjusted it with the greatest care, and tapped upon it with the round wooden handle of his little hammer. At each touch he examined the surface with his lens to assure himself that he was making the improvement he contemplated. It was very delicate work, and as he did it he felt a certain pride in the reflection that he could not have detected the place where improvement was possible when he had worked upon the piece ten years ago. He had found it now, in the infinitesimal touches upon the expres-

sion of the face, in the minute increase in the depressions and accentuated lines in the anatomy of the figure. As he went over each portion he became more and more certain that though he could not at present do better in the way of idea and general execution, he had nevertheless gained in subtle knowledge of effects and in skill of handling the chisel upon very delicate points. The certainty gave him the real satisfaction of legitimate pride. He knew that he had reached the zenith of his capacities. His old wish to keep the crucifix for himself began to return.

If he disposed of Paolo he might keep his work. Only Paolo had seen it. The absurd want of logic in the conclusion did not strike him. He had not pledged himself to his brother to give this particular crucifix to the Cardinal, and if he had, he could easily have found a reason for keeping it back. But he was too much accustomed to think that Paolo was always in the way of his wishes, to look at so simple a matter in such a simple light.

"It is strange," he said to himself. "The smallest things seem to point to it. If he would only come!"

Again his mind returned to the contemplation of the deed, and again he reviewed all the circumstances necessary for its safe execution. What an inspiration, he thought, and what a pity it had not

found shape in fact at the very moment when it had presented itself! He considered why he had never thought of it before, in all the years, as a means of freeing himself effectually from the despotism he detested. It was a despotism, he reflected, and no other word expressed it. He recalled many scenes in his home, in which Paolo had interfered. He remembered how one Sunday, in the afternoon, they had all been together before going to walk in the Corso, and how he had undertaken to demonstrate to Maria Luisa and Lucia the folly of wasting time in going to church on Sundays. He had argued gently and reasonably, he thought. But suddenly Paolo had interrupted him, saying that he would not allow Marzio to compare a church to a circus, nor priests to mountebanks and tight-rope dancers. Why not? Then the women had begun to scream and cry, and to talk of his blasphemous language until he could not hear himself speak. It was Paolo's fault. If Paolo had not been there the women would have listened patiently enough, and would doubtless have reaped some good from his reasonable discourse. On another occasion Marzio had declared that Lucia should never be taught anything about Christianity, that the definition of God was reason, that Garibaldi had baptized one child in the name of Reason and that he, Marzio, could baptize another quite as effectually. Paolo had inter-

fered, and Maria Luisa had screamed. The contest had lasted nearly a month, at the end of which time, Marzio had been obliged to abandon the uneven contest, vowing vengeance in some shape for the future.

Many and many such scenes rose to his memory, and in every one Paolo was the opposer, the enemy of his peace, the champion of all that he hated and despised. In great things and small his brother had been his antagonist from his early manhood, through eighteen years of married life to the present day. And yet, without Paolo, he could hardly have hoped to find himself in his present state of fortune.

This was one of the chief sources of his humiliation in his own eyes. With such a character as his, it is eminently true that it is harder to forgive a benefit than an injury. He might have felt less bitterly against his brother if he had not received at his hands the orders and commissions which had turned into solid money in the bank. It was hard to face Paolo, knowing that he owed two-thirds of his fortune to such a source. If he could get rid of the priest he would be relieved at once from the burden of this annoyance, of this financial subjection, as well as of all that embittered his life. He pictured to himself his wife and daughter listening respectfully to his harangues and beginning to prac-

tise his principles, Gianbattista, an eloquent member of the society in the inner room of the old inn, reformed, purged from his sneaking fondness for Paolo—since Paolo would not be in the world any longer—and ultimately married to Lucia, the father of children who should all be baptized in the name of Reason, and the worthy successor of himself, Marzio Pandolfi.

Scrutinising the statue under his lens, he detected a slight imperfection in the place where one of the sharp thorns touched the silver forehead of the beautiful, tortured head. He looked about for a tool fine enough for the work, but none suited his wants. He took up the long fine-pointed punch he had thrown back upon the table after the scene in the morning. It was too long, and over sharp, but by turning it sideways it would do the work under his dexterous fingers.

"Strange!" he muttered, as he tapped upon the tool. "It is like a consecration!"

When he had made the stroke he dropped the instrument into the pocket of his blouse, as though fearing to lose it. He had no occasion to use it again, though he went on with his work during several hours.

The thoughts which had passed through his brain recurred, and did not diminish in clearness. On the contrary, it was as though the passing impulse of

the morning had grown during those short hours into a settled and unchangeable resolution. Once he rose from his stool, and going to the corner, dragged away the iron-bound safe from its place. A rusty ring lay flat in a little hollow in the surface of the trap-door. Marzio bent over it with a pale face and gleaming eyes. It seemed to him as though, if he looked round, he should see Paolo's body lying on the floor, ready to be dropped into the space below. He raised the wood and set the trap back against the wall, peering down into the black depths. A damp smell came up to his nostrils from the moist staircase. He struck a match, and held it into the opening, to see in what direction the stairs led down.

Something moved behind him and made a little noise. With a short cry of horror Marzio sprang back from the opening and looked round. It was as though the body of the murdered man had stirred upon the floor. His overstrained imagination terrified him, and his eyes started from his head. He examined the bench and saw the cause of the sound in a moment. The silver Christ, unsteadily propped in the position in which he had just placed it, had fallen upon one side of the pad by its own weight.

Marzio's heart still beat desperately as he went

back to the hole and carefully reclosed the trap-door, dragging the heavy safe to its position over the ring. Trembling violently, he sat down upon his stool and wiped the cold perspiration from his forehead. Then, as he laid the figure upon the cushion, he glanced uneasily behind him and at the corner.

CHAPTER IX

When Don Paolo had shut the door of the studio and found himself once more in the open street, he felt a strangely unpleasant sensation about the heart, and for a few moments he was very pale. He had suffered a shock, and in spite of his best efforts to explain away what had occurred, he knew that he had been in danger. Any one who, being himself defenceless, has suddenly seen a pistol pointed at him in earnest, or a sharp weapon raised in the air to strike him, knows the feeling well enough. Probably he has afterwards tried to reason upon what he felt in that moment, and has failed to come to any conclusion except the very simple one, that he was badly frightened. Hector was no coward, but he let Achilles chase him three times round Troy before he could make up his mind to stand and fight, and but for Athena he might have run even further. And yet Hector was armed at all points for battle. He was badly frightened, brave man as he was.

But when the first impression was gone, and Paolo was walking quickly in the direction of the palace where the Cardinal lived, he stoutly denied to himself that Marzio had meant to harm him. In the first place, he could find no adequate reason for such an attempt upon his life. It was true that his relations with his brother had not been very amicable for some time; but between quarrelling and doing murder Paolo saw a gulf too wide to be easily overstepped, even by such a person as Marzio. Then, too, the good man was unwilling to suspect any one of bad intentions, still less of meditating a crime. This consideration, however, was not, logically speaking, in Marzio's favour; for since Paolo was less suspicious than other men, it must necessarily have needed a severe shock to shake his faith in his brother's innocence. He had seen the weapon in the air, and had seen also the murderous look in the artist's eyes.

"I had better not think anything more about it," he said to himself, fearing lest he should think anything unjust.

So he went on his way towards the palace, and tried to think about Gianbattista and Lucia, their marriage and their future life. The two young faces came up before him as he walked, and he smiled calmly, forgetting what he had so recently passed through, in the pleasant contemplation of a happiness

not his own. He reached his rooms, high up at the top of the ancient building, and he sighed with a sense of relief as he sat down upon the battered old chair before his writing-table.

Presently the Cardinal sent for him. Don Paolo rose and carefully brushed the dust from his cassock and mantle, and smoothed the long silk nap of his hat. He was a very neat man and scrupulous as to his appearance. Moreover, he regarded the Cardinal with a certain awe, as being far removed beyond the sphere of ordinary humanity, even though he had known him intimately for years. This idea of the great importance of the princes of the Church is inherent in the Roman mind. There is no particular reason why it should be eradicted, since it exists, and does no harm to any one, but it is a singular fact and worthy of remark. It is one of those many relics of old times, which no amount of outward change has been able to obliterate. A Cardinal in Rome occupies a position wholly distinct from that of any other dignitary or hereditary noble. It is not so elsewhere, except perhaps in some parts of the south. The Piedmontese scoffs at cardinals, because he scoffs at the Church and at all religion in general. The Florentine shrugs his shoulders because cardinals represent Rome, and Rome, with all that is in it, is hateful to Florence, and always was. But the true Roman, even when he has adopted the

ideas of the new school, still feels an unaccountable reverence for the scarlet mantle. There is a dignity —often, now, very far from magnificent—about the household of a cardinal, which is not found elsewhere. The servants are more grave and tread more softly, the rooms are darker and more severe, the atmosphere is more still and the silence more intense, than in the houses of lay princes. A man feels in the very air the presence of a far-reaching power, noiselessly working to produce great results.

Don Paolo descended the stairs and entered the apartments through the usual green baize door, which swung upon its hinges by its own weight behind him. He passed through several large halls, scantily and sombrely furnished, in the last of which stood the throne chair, turned to the wall, beneath a red canopy. Beyond this great reception-chamber, and communicating with it by a low masked door, was the Cardinal's study, a small room, very high and lighted by a single tall window which opened upon an inner court of the palace. The furniture was very simple, consisting of a large writing-table, a few high-backed chairs, and the Cardinal's own easy-chair, covered with dingy leather and well worn by use. On the dark green walls hung two engravings, one a portrait of Pius IX., the other a likeness of Leo XIII. The Cardinal himself sat in the arm-

chair, holding a newspaper spread out upon his knees.

"Good-day, Don Paolo," he said, in a pleasant, but not very musical, voice.

His Eminence was a man about sixty years of age hale and strong in appearance, but below the middle height and somewhat inclining to stoutness. His face was round, and the complexion very clear which, with his small and bright brown eyes, gave him a look of cheerful vitality. Short white hair fringed his head where it was not covered by the small scarlet skull-cap. He wore a purple cassock with scarlet buttons and a scarlet silk mantle, which fell in graceful folds over one arm of the chair.

"Good-day, Eminence," answered Don Paolo touching the great ruby ring with his lips. Then in obedience to a gesture, the priest sat down upon one of the high-backed chairs.

"What weather have we to-day?" asked the Cardinal after a pause.

"Scirocco, Eminence."

"Ah, I thought so—especially this morning, very early. It is very disagreeable. Since Padre Secchi found that the scirocco really brings the sand of the desert with it, I dislike it more than ever. And what have you been doing, Don Paolo? Have you been to see about the crucifix?"

"I spoke to my brother about it last night

Eminence. He said he would do his best to make it in the time, but that he would have preferred to have a little longer."

"He is a good artist, your brother," said the Cardinal, nodding his head slowly, and joining his hands, while the newspaper slipped to the floor.

"A good artist," repeated Don Paolo, stooping to pick up the sheet. "I have just seen his best work —a crucifix such as your Eminence wishes. Indeed, he proposed that you should take it, for he says he can make nothing better."

"Let us see, let us see," answered the prelate, in a tone which showed that he did not altogether like the proposal. "You say he has it already made. Tell me, has your brother much work to do just now?"

"Not much, Eminence. He has just finished the grating of a chapel for some church or other. I think I saw a silver ewer begun upon his table."

"I thought that perhaps he had not time for my crucifix."

"But he is an artist, my brother!" cried the priest, who resented the idea that Marzio might wish to palm off an ill-made object to save time. "He is a good artist, he loves the work, he always does his best! When he says he can do nothing better than what he has already finished, I believe him."

"So much the better," replied the Cardinal. "But we must see the work before deciding. You seem to have great faith in your brother's good intentions, Don Paolo. Is it not true? Dear me! You were almost angry with me for suggesting that he might be too busy to undertake my commission."

"Angry! I angry? Your Eminence is unjust. Marzio puts much conscience into his work. That is all."

"Ah, he is a man of conscience? I did not know. But, being your brother, he should be, Don Paolo." The prelate's bright brown eyes twinkled.

Paolo was silent, though he bowed his head in acknowledgment of the indirect praise.

"You do not say anything," observed the Cardinal, looking at his secretary with a smile.

"He is a man of convictions," answered Paolo, at last.

"That is better than nothing, better than being lukewarm. 'Because thou art lukewarm,' you know the rest."

"*Incipiam te evomere,*" replied the priest mechanically. "Marzio is not lukewarm."

"*Frigidusne?*" asked the Cardinal.

"Hardly that."

"*An calidus?*"

"Not very, Eminence. That is, not exactly."

"But then, in heaven's name, what is he?"

laughed the prelate. "If he is not cold, nor hot, nor lukewarm, what is he? He interests me. He is a singular case."

"He is a man who has his opinions," answered Don Paolo. "What shall I say? He is so good an artist that he is a little crazy about other things."

"His opinions are not ours, I suppose. I have sometimes thought as much from the way you speak of him. Well, well—he is not old; his opinions will change. You are very much attached to your brother, Don Paolo, are you not?"

"We are brothers, Eminence."

"So were Cain and Abel, if I am not mistaken," observed the Cardinal. Paolo looked about the room uneasily. "I only mean to say," continued the prelate, "that men may be brothers and yet not love each other."

"*Come si fà?* What can one do about it?" ejaculated Paolo.

"You must try and influence him. You must do your best to make him change his views. You must make an effort to bring him to a better state of mind."

"Eh! I know," answered the priest. "I do my best, but I do not succeed. He thinks I interefere. I am not San Filippo Neri. Why should I conceal the matter? Marzio is not a bad man, but he is crazy about what he calls politics. He believes in

a new state of things. He thinks that everything is bad and ought to be destroyed. Then he and his friends would build up the ideal state."

"There would soon be nothing but equality to eat —fried, roast and boiled. I have heard that there are socialists even here in Rome. I cannot imagine what they want."

"They want to divide the wealth of the country among themselves," answered Don Paolo. "What strange ideas men have!"

"To divide the wealth of the country they have only to subtract a paper currency from an inflated national debt. There would be more unrighteousness than mammon left after such a proceeding. It reminds me of a story I heard last year. A deputation of socialists waited upon a high personage in Vienna. Who knows what for? But they went. They told him that it was his duty to divide his wealth amongst the inhabitants of the city. And he said they were quite right. 'Look here,' said he, 'I possess about seven hundred thousand florins. It chances that Vienna has about seven hundred thousand inhabitants. Here, you have each one florin. It is your share. Good-morning.' You see he was quite just. So, perhaps, if your brother had his way, and destroyed everything, and divided the proceeds equally, he would have less afterwards than he had before. What do you think?"

"It is quite true, Eminence. But I am afraid he will never understand that. He has very unchangeable opinions."

"They will change all the more suddenly when he is tired of them. Those ideas are morbid, like the ravings of a man in a fever. When the fever has worn itself out, there comes a great sense of lassitude, and a desire for peace."

"Provided it ever really does wear itself out," said Don Paolo sadly.

"Eh! it will, some day. With such political ideas, I suppose your brother is an atheist, is he not?"

"I hope he believes in something," replied the priest evasively.

"And yet he makes a good living by manufacturing vessels for the service of the Church," continued the Cardinal, with a smile. "Why did you never tell me about your brother's peculiar views, Don Paolo?"

"Why should I trouble you with such matters? I am sorry I have said so much, for no one can understand exactly what Marzio is, who does not know him. It is an injury to him to let your Eminence know that he is a freethinker. And yet he is not a bad man, I believe. He has no vices that I know of, except a sharp tongue. He is sober and works hard. That is much in these days. Though

he is mistaken, he will doubtless come to his senses, as you say. I do not hate him. I would not injure him."

"Why do you think it can harm him to let me know about him? Do you think that I, or others, would not employ him if we knew all about him?"

"It would seem natural that your Eminence should hesitate to do so."

"Let us see, Don Paolo. There are some bad priests in the world, I suppose; are there not?"

"It is to be feared——"

"Yes, there are. There are bad priests in all forms of religion. Yet they say mass. Of course, very often the people know that they are bad. Do you think that the mass is less efficacious for the salvation of those who attend it, provided that they themselves pray with the same earnestness?"

"No; certainly not. For otherwise it would be necessary that the people should ascertain whether the priest is in a state of grace every time he celebrates; and since their salvation would then depend upon that, they would be committing a sin if they did not examine the relative morality of different priests and select the most saintly one."

"Well then, so much the more is it indifferent whether the inanimate vessels we use are chiselled by a saint or an unbeliever. Their use sanctifies

them, not the moral goodness of the artist. For, by your own argument, we should otherwise be committing a sin if we did not find out the most saintly men and set them to silver-chiselling instead of ordaining them bishops and archbishops. It would take a long time to build a church if you only employed masons who were in a state of grace."

"Well, but would you not prefer that the artist should be a good man?"

"For his own sake, Don Paolo, for his own sake. The thing he makes is not at all less worthy if he is bad. Are there not in many of our churches pillars that stood in Roman temples? Is not the canopy over the high altar in Saint Peter's made of the bronze roof of the Pantheon? And besides, what is goodness? We are all bad, but some are worse than others. It is not our business to judge, or to distribute commissions for works of art to those whom we think the best among men, as one gives medals and prizes to industrious and well-behaved children."

"That is very clear, and very true," answered the priest.

He did not really want to discuss the question of Marzio's belief or unbelief. Perhaps, if he had not been disturbed in mind by the events of the morning he would have avoided the subject, as he

had often done before the Cardinal had questioned him. But to-day he was not quite himself, and being unable to tell a falsehood of any kind he had spoken more of the truth than he had wished. He felt that he had perhaps been unjust to his brother. He looked ill at ease, and the Cardinal noticed it, for he was a kindly man and very fond of his secretary.

"You must not let the matter trouble you," said the prelate, after a pause. "I am an inquisitive old man, as you know, and I like to be acquainted with my friends' affairs. But I am afraid I have annoyed you——"

"Oh! Your Eminence could never——"

"Never intentionally," interrupted the Cardinal. "But it is human to err, and it is especially human to bore one's fellow-creatures with inquisitive questions. We all have our trouble, Don Paolo, and I am yours. Some day, perhaps, you will be a cardinal yourself—who knows? I hope so. And then you will have an excellent secretary, who will be much too good, even for you, and whom you can torture by the hour together with inquiries about his relations. Well, if it is only for your sake, Sor Marzio shall never have fewer commissions, even if he turn out more in earnest with his socialism than most of those fellows."

"You are too kind," said Paolo simply.

He was very grateful for the kindly words, for he knew that they were meant and not said merely in jest. The idea that he had perhaps injured Marzio in the Cardinal's estimation was very painful to him, in spite of what he had felt that morning. Moreover, the prelate's plain, common-sense view of the case reassured him, and removed a doubt that had long ago disturbed his peace of mind. On reflection it seemed true enough, and altogether reasonable, but Paolo knew in his heart what a sensation of repulsion, not to say loathing, he would experience if he should ever be called upon to use in the sacred services a vessel of his brother's making. The thought that those long, cruel fingers of Marzio's had hammered and worked out the delicate design would pursue him and disturb his thoughts. The sound of Marzio's voice, mocking at all the priest held holy, would be in his ears and would mingle with the very words of the canon.

But then, provided that he himself were not obliged to use his brother's chalices, what could it matter? The Cardinal did not know the artist, and whatever picture he might make to himself of the man would be shadowy and indistinct. The feeling, then, was his own and quite personal. It would be the height of superstitious folly to suppose that any evil principle could be attached to the silver and gold because they were chiselled by im-

pious hands. A simple matter this, but one which had many a time distressed Don Paolo.

There was a long pause after the priest's last words, during which the prelate looked at him from time to time, examined his own white hands, and turned his great ruby ring round his finger.

"Let us go to work," he said at length, as though dismissing the subject of the conversation from his mind.

Paolo fetched a large portfolio of papers and established himself at the writing-table, while the Cardinal examined the documents one by one, and dictated what he had to say about them to his secretary. During two hours or more the two men remained steadily at their task. When the last paper was read and the last note upon it written out, the Cardinal rose from his arm-chair and went to the window. There was no sound in the room but that of the sand rattling upon the stiff surface, as Paolo poured it over the wet ink in the old-fashioned way, shook it about and returned it to the little sandbox by the inkstand. Suddenly the old churchman turned round and faced the priest.

"One of these days, when you and I are asleep out there at San Lorenzo, there will be a fight, my friend," he said.

"About what, Eminence?" asked the other.

"About silver chalices, perhaps. About many

things. It will be a great fight, such as the world has never seen before."

"I do not understand," said Don Paolo.

"Your brother represents an idea," answered the Cardinal. "That idea is the subversion of all social principle. It is an idea which must spread, because there is an enormous number of depraved men in the world who have a very great interest in the destruction of law. The watchword of that party will always be 'there is no God,' because God is order, and they desire disorder. They will, it is true, always be a minority, because the greater part of mankind are determined that order shall not be destroyed. But those fellows will fight to the death, because they know that in that battle there will be no quarter for the vanquished. It will be a mighty struggle and will last long, but it will be decisive, and will perhaps never be revived when it is once over. Men will kill each other wherever they meet, during months and years, before the end comes, for all men who say that there is a God in Heaven will be upon one side, and all those who say there is no God will be upon the other."

"May we not be alive to see anything so dreadful!" exclaimed Don Paolo devoutly.

"No, you and I shall not see it. But those little children who are playing with chestnuts down there in the courtyard—they will see it. The world is

uneasy and dreads the very name of war, lest war should become universal if it once breaks out. Tell your brother that."

"It is what he longs for. He is always speaking of it."

"Then it is inevitable. When many millions like him have determined that there shall be evil done, it cannot long be warded off. Their blood be on their own heads."

When Don Paolo had climbed again to his lonely lodging, half an hour later, he pondered long upon what the Cardinal had said to him, and the longer he thought of it, the more truth there seemed to be in the prediction.

CHAPTER X

GIANBATTISTA reached the church in which he was to do his work, and superintend the unloading of the carts. It was but a little after one o'clock, and he expected to succeed in putting up the grating before night. The pieces were carefully carried to the chapel where they were to be placed, and laid down in the order in which they would be needed. It took a long time to arrange them, and the apprenitce was glad he had advised Maria Luisa and Lucia to come late. It would have wearied them, he reflected, to assist at the endless fitting and screwing of the joints, and they would have had no impression of the whole until they were tired of looking at the details.

For hours he laboured with the men, not allowing anything to be done without his supervision, and doing more himself than any of the workmen. He grew hot and interested as the time went on, and he began to doubt whether the work could be

finished before sunset. The workmen themselves, who preferred a job of this kind to the regular occupation of the studio, seemed in no hurry, though they did what was expected of them quietly and methodically. Each one of them was calculating, as nearly as possible, the length of time needed to drive a screw, to lift a piece into position, to finish off a shank till it fitted closely in the prepared socket. Half an hour wasted in driblets to-day, would ensure them for the morrow the diversion of an hour or two in coming to the church and returning from it.

From time to time Gianbattista glanced towards the door, and as the hours advanced his look took the same direction more often. At last, as the rays of the evening sun fell through the western window, he heard steps, and was presently rewarded by the appearance of the Signora Pandolfi, followed closely by Lucia. They greeted Gianbattista from a distance, for the church being under repairs was closed to the public, and had not been in use for years, so that the sound of voices did not seem unnatural nor irreverent.

"It is not finished," said Gianbattista, coming forward to meet them; "but you can see what it will be like. Another hour will be enough."

At that moment Don Paolo suddenly appeared, walking fast up the aisle in pursuit of the two

women. They all greeted him with an exclamation of surprise.

"Eh!" he exclaimed, "you are astonished to see me? I was passing and saw you go in, and as I knew about the grating, I guessed what you came for and followed you. Is Marzio here?"

"No," answered Gianbattista. "He said he might perhaps come, but I doubt it. I fancy he wants to be alone."

"Yes," replied Don Paolo thoughtfully, "I daresay he wants to be alone."

"He has had a good many emotions to-day," remarked Gianbattista. "We shall see how he will be this evening. Of course, you have heard the news, Don Paolo? Besides, you see I am at work, so that the first great difference has been settled. Lucia managed it—she has an eloquence, that young lady! She could preach better than you, Don Paolo."

"She is a little angel," exclaimed the priest, tapping his niece's dark cheek with his white hand.

"That is four to-day!" cried Lucia, laughing. "First mamma, then papa—figure to yourself papa!—then Tista, and now Uncle Paolo. Eh! if the wings don't grow before the Ave Maria——"

She broke off with a pretty motion of her shoulders, showing her white teeth and turning to look at Gianbattista. Then the young man took

them to see the grating. A good portion of it was put up, and it produced a good effect. The whole thing was about ten or twelve feet high, consisting of widely-set gilt bars, between which were fastened large arabesques and scrolls. On each side of the gate, in the middle, an angel supported a metal drapery, of which the folds were in reality of separate pieces, but which, as it now appeared, all screwed together in its place, had a very free and light effect. It was work of a conventional kind and of a conventional school, but even here Marzio's great talent had shown itself in his rare knowledge of effects and free modelling; the high lights were carefully chosen and followed out, and the deep shadows of the folds in dull gold gave a richness to the drapery not often found in this species of decoration. The figures of the angels, too, were done by an artist's hand—conventional, like the rest, but free from heaviness or anatomical defects.

"It is not bad," said Don Paolo, in a tone which surprised every one. He was not often slow to praise his brother's work.

"How, not bad? Is that all you say?" asked Gianbattista, in considerable astonishment. He felt, too, that as Marzio and he worked together, he deserved some part of the credit. "It is church decoration, of course, and not a 'piece,' as we say, but I would like to see anybody do better."

"Well, well, Tista, forgive me," he answered. "The fact is, Marzio showed me something to-day so wonderful, that I see no beauty in anything else —or, at least, not so much beauty as I ought to see. I went in to find him again, you know, just as Lucia was leaving, and he showed me a crucifix—a marvel, a wonder!—he said he had had it a long time, put away in a box."

"I never saw it," said Tista.

"I did!" exclaimed Lucia. She regretted the words as soon as she had spoken them, and bit her lip. She had not told her mother what she had told Gianbattista.

"When did you see it? Is it so very beautiful?" asked the Signora Pandolfi.

"Oh, I only saw it through the door, when I went," she answered quickly. "The door was open, but I knocked and I saw him hide it. But I think it was very fine—splendid! What did you talk about, Uncle Paolo? You have not told us about your visit. I whispered to you that everything was settled, but you looked as though you did not understand. What did you say to each other?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing of any importance," said Don Paolo in some embarrassment. He suddenly recollected that, owing to his brother's strange conduct, he had left the studio without saying a word about the errand which had brought him.

"Nothing," he repeated. "We talked about the crucifix, and Marzio gave a very long explanation of the way it was made. Besides, as Lucia says, she had told me that everything was settled, and Marzio spoke very quietly."

This was literally true. Marzio's words had been gentle enough. It was his action that had at first startled Don Paolo, and had afterwards set him thinking and reflecting on the events of those few minutes. But he would not for anything in the world have allowed any of his three companions to know what had happened. He was himself not sure. Marzio had excused the position of his hand by saying that the sun was in his eyes. There was something else in his eyes, thought Paolo; a look of hatred and of eager desire for blood which it was horrible to remember. Perhaps he ought not to remember it, for he might be mistaken after all, and it was a great sin to suspect any one of wishing to commit such a crime; but, nevertheless, and in spite of his desire that it might not have been true, Don Paolo was conscious of having received the impression, and he was sure that it had not been the result of any foolish fright. He was not a cowardly man, and although his physical courage had rarely been put to the test, no one who knew him would have charged him with the contemptible timidity which imagines danger gratuitously, and is afraid

where no fear is. He was of a better temper than Marzio, who had been startled so terribly by a slight noise when his back was turned. And yet he had been profoundly affected by the scene of the morning, and had not yet entirely recovered his serenity.

Lucia noticed the tone of his answer, and suspected that something had happened, though her suspicion took a direction exactly opposed to the fact. She remembered what she had seen herself, and recalling the fact that Paolo had entered the workshop just as she was leaving it, she saw nothing unnatural in the supposition that her father's conversation with her uncle had taken a religious tone. She used the word religion to express to herself what she meant. She thought it quite possible that after Marzio had been so suddenly softened, and evidently affected, by her own fainting fit, and after having been absorbed in some sort of devotional meditation, he might have spoken of his feelings to Don Paolo, who in his turn would have seized the opportunity for working upon his brother's mind. Paolo, she thought, would naturally not care to speak lightly of such an occurrence, and his somewhat constrained manner at the present moment might be attributed to this cause. To prevent any further questions from her mother or Gianbattista, Lucia interposed.

"Yes," she said, "he seemed very quiet. He hardly spoke at dinner. But Tista says he may perhaps be here before long, and then we shall know."

It was not very clear what was to be known, and Lucia hastened to direct their attention to the new grating. Gianbattista returned to work with the men, and the two women and Don Paolo stood looking on, occasionally shifting their position to get a better view of the work. Gianbattista was mounted upon a ladder which leaned against one of the marble pillars at the entrance of the side chapel closed by the grating. A heavy piece of arabesque work had just been got into its place, and was tied with cords while the young man ran a screw through the prepared holes to fasten one side of the fragment to the bar. He was awkwardly placed, but he had sent the men to uncover and clean the last pieces, at a little distance from where he was at work. The three visitors observed him with interest, probably remarking to themselves that it must need good nerves to maintain one's self in such a position. Don Paolo, especially, was more nervous than the rest, owing, perhaps, to what had occurred in the morning. All at once, as he watched Gianbattista's twisted attitude, as the apprentice strained himself and turned so as to drive the screw effectually, the foot of the ladder seemed to move a little on the

smooth marble pavement. With a quick movement Don Paolo stepped forward, with the intention of grasping the ladder.

Hearing the sound of rapid steps, Gianbattista turned his head and a part of his body to see what had happened. The sudden movement shifted the weight, and definitely destroyed the balance of the ladder. With a sharp screech, like that of a bad pencil scratching on a slate, the lower ends of the uprights slipped outward from the pillar. Gianbattista clutched at the metal bars desperately, but the long screw-driver in his hands impeded him, and he missed his hold.

Don Paolo, the sound of whose step had at first made the young man turn, and had thus probably precipitated the accident, sprang forward, threw himself under the falling ladder, and grasped it with all his might. But it was too late. Gianbattista was heavy, and the whole ladder with his weight upon it had gained too much impetus to be easily stopped by one man. With a loud crash he fell with the wooden frame upon the smooth marble floor. Rolling to one side, Gianbattista leapt to his feet, dazed but apparently unhurt.

The priest lay motionless in a distorted position under the ladder, his head bent almost beneath his body, and one arm projecting upon the pavement, seemingly twisted in its socket, the palm

upwards. The long white fingers twitched convulsively once or twice, and then were still. It was all the affair of a moment. Maria Luisa screamed and leaned against the pillar for support, while Lucia ran forward and knelt beside the injured man. Gianbattista, whose life had probably been saved by Don Paolo's quick action, was dragging away the great ladder, and the workmen came running up in confusion to see what had happened.

It seemed as though Marzio's wish had been accomplished without his agency. A deadly livid colour overspread the priest's refined features, and as they lifted him his limp limbs hung down as though the vitality would never return to them—all except the left arm, which was turned stiffly out and seemed to refuse to hang down with the rest. It was dislocated at the shoulder.

A scene of indescribable confusion followed, in which Gianbattista alone seemed to maintain some semblance of coolness. The rest all spoke and cried at once. Maria Luisa and Lucia knelt beside the body where they had laid it on the steps of the high altar, crying aloud, kissing the white hands and beating their breasts, praying, sobbing, and calling upon Paolo to speak to them, all in a breath.

"He is dead as a stone," said one of the workmen in a low voice.

"Eh! He is in Paradise," said another, kneeling at the priest's feet and rubbing them.

"Take him to the hospital, Sor Tista——"

"Better take him home——"

"I will run and call Sor Marzio——"

"There is an apothecary in the next street."

"A doctor is better—apothecaries are all murderers."

Gianbattista, very pale, but collected and steady, pushed the men gently away from the body.

"*Cari miei,* my dear fellows," he said, "he may be alive. One of you run and get a carriage to the side door of the sacristy. The rest of you put the things together and be careful to leave nothing where it can fall. We will take him to Sor Marzio's house and get the best doctor."

"There is not even a drop of holy water in the basins," moaned Maria Luisa.

"He will go to Heaven without holy water," sobbed Lucia. "Oh, how good he was——"

Gianbattista kneeled down in his turn and tried to find the pulse in the poor limp wrist. Then he listened for the heart. He fancied he could hear a faint flutter in the breast. He looked up and a little colour came to his pale face.

"I think he is alive," he said to the two women, and then bent down again and listened. "Yes," he continued joyfully. "The heart beats. Gently—help

me to carry him to the sacristy; get his hat one o you. So—carefully—do not twist that arm. I think I see colour in his cheeks——"

With four other men Gianbattista raised the body and bore it carefully to the sacristy. The cab was already at the door, and in a few minutes poor Don Paolo was placed in it. The hood was raised, and Maria Luisa got in and sat supporting the drooping head upon her broad bosom. Lucia took the little seat in front, and Gianbattista mounted to the box after directing the four men to follow in a second cab as fast as they could, to help to carry the priest upstairs. He sent another in search of a surgeon.

"Do not tell Sor Marzio—do not go to the workshop," he said in a last injunction. He knew that Marzio would be of no use in such an emergency, and he hoped that Don Paolo might be pronounced out of danger before the chiseller knew anything of the accident.

In half an hour the injured man was lying in Gianbattista's bed. It was now evident that he was alive, for he breathed heavily and regularly. But the half-closed eyes had no intelligence in them, and the slight flush in the hollow cheeks was not natural to see. The twisted arm still stuck out of the bed coverings in a painfully distorted attitude. The two women and Gianbattista stood by the bedside in silence, waiting for the arrival of the surgeon.

He came at last, a quiet-looking man of middle age, with grizzled hair and a face deeply pitted with the smallpox. He seemed to know what he was about, for he asked for a detailed account of the accident from Gianbattista while he examined the patient. The young man, who was beginning to feel the effects of the fall, now that the first excitement had subsided, sat down while he told the story. The surgeon urged the two women to leave the room.

"The left arm is dislocated at the shoulder, without fracture," said the surgeon. "Lend me a hand, will you? Hold his body firmly—here and here—with all your might, while I pull the joint into place. If his head or spine are not injured the pain may bring him to consciousness. That will be a good thing. Now, ready—one, two, three, pull!"

The two men gave a vigorous jerk, and to Gianbattista's surprise the arm fell back in a natural position, but the injured priest's features expressed no pain. He was evidently quite unconscious. A further examination led the surgeon to believe that the harm was more serious. There was a bad bruise on one side of the head, and more than one upon other parts of the body.

"Will he live?" asked Gianbattista faintly, as he sank back into his chair.

"Oh yes—probably. He is likely to have a brain fever. One cannot tell. How old is he?"

He asked one or two other questions, arranging the patient's position with skilful hands while he talked. Then he asked for paper and wrote a prescription.

"Nothing more can be done for the present," he said. "You should put some ice on his head, and if he recovers consciousness, so as to speak before I come back, observe what he says. He may be in a delirium, or he may talk quite rationally. One cannot tell. Send for this medicine and give it to him if he is conscious. Otherwise, only keep his head cool. I will come back early in the evening. You are not hurt yourself?" he inquired, looking at Gianbattista curiously.

"No; I am badly shaken, and my hands are a little cut—that is all," answered the young man.

"What a beautiful thing youth is!" observed the surgeon philosophically, as he went away.

Gianbattista remained alone in the sick-room seated upon his chair by the head of the bed. With anxious interest and attention he watched the expressionless face as the heavy breath came and went between the parted lips. In the distance he could hear the sobbing and incoherent talk of the two women, as the doctor explained to them Paolo's condition, but he was now too much dazed to give any thought to them. It seemed to him that Don Paolo had sacrificed his life for him, and that he

had no other duty than to sit beside the bed and watch his friend. All the impressions of the afternoon were very much confused, and the shock of the fall had told upon his nerves far more severely than he had at first realised. His limbs ached and his hands pained him; at the same time he felt dizzy, and the outline of Don Paolo's face grew indistinct as he watched it. He was roused by the entry of Lucia, who had hastily laid aside her hat. Her face was pale, and her dark eyes were swollen with tears; her hair was in disorder and was falling about her neck. Gianbattista instinctively rose and put his arm about the girl's waist as they stood together and looked at the sick man. He felt that it was his duty to comfort her.

"The doctor thinks he may get well," he said.

"Who knows?" she answered tearfully, and shook her head. "Oh, Tista, he was our best friend!"

"It was in trying to save me——" said the young fellow. But he got no further. The words stuck in his throat.

"If he lives I will be a son to him!" he added presently. "I will never leave him. But perhaps—perhaps he is too good to live, Lucia!"

"He must not die. I will take care of him," answered Lucia. "You must pray for him, Tista, and I will—we all will!"

"Eh! I will try, but I don't understand that kind

of thing as well as you," said Gianbattista dolefully. "If you think it is of any use——"

"Of course it is of use, my heart; do not doubt it," replied the young girl gravely. Then her features suddenly quivered, she turned away, and, hiding her face on the pillow beside the priest's unconscious head, she sobbed as though her heart would break. Gianbattista knelt down at her side and put his arm round her neck, whispering lovingly in her ear.

The day was fading, and the last glow of the sun in the south-western sky came through the small window at the other end of the narrow room, illuminating the simple furniture, the white bed coverings, the upturned face of the injured man, and the two young figures that knelt at the bedside. It was Gianbattista's room, and there was little enough in it. The bare bricks, with only a narrow bit of green drugget by the bed, the plain deal table before the window, the tiny round mirror set in lead, at which the apprentice shaved himself, the crazy old chest of drawers—that was all. The whitewashed walls were relieved by two or three drawings of chalices and other church vessels, the colour of the gold or silver, and of the gems, washed into one half of the design and the other side left in black and white. A little black cross hung above the bedstead, with a bit of an olive branch nailed over it—a reminiscence of the last Palm Sunday. There were two nails in

another part of the room, on which some old clothes were hung—that was all. But the deep light of the failing day shed a peaceful halo over everything, and touched the coarse details of a hard-working existence with the divine light of Heaven.

Lucia's sobbing ceased after a while, and, as the sunset faded into twilight and dusk, the silence grew more profound; the sick man's breathing became lighter, as though in his unconsciousness he were beginning to rest after the day in which he had endured so much. From the sitting-room beyond the short passage the sound of Maria Luisa's voice, moaning in concert with old Assunta, gradually diminished till they were heard only at intervals, and at last ceased altogether. The household of Marzio Pandolfi was hushed in the presence of a great sorrow, and awed by the anticipation of a great misfortune.

CHAPTER XI

Marzio, in ignorance of all that was happening at the church, continued to work in the solitude of his studio, and the current of his thoughts flowed on in the same channel. He tried to force his attention upon the details of the design he meditated against his brother's life, and for some time he succeeded. But another influence had begun to work upon his brain, since the moment when he had been frightened by the sound behind him while he was examining the hole beneath the strong box. He would not own to himself that such a senseless fear could have produced a permanent impression on him, and yet he felt disturbed and unsettled, unaccountably discomposed, and altogether uncomfortable. He could not help looking round from time to time at the door, and more than once his eyes rested for several seconds upon the safe, while a slight shiver ran through his body and seemed to chill his fingers.

But he worked on in spite of all this. The habit of the chisel was not to be destroyed by the fancies

scare of a moment, and though his eyes wandered now and then, they came back to the silver statue as keen as ever. A little touch with the steel at one point, a little burnishing at another, the accentuation of a line, the deepening of a shadow—he studied every detail with a minute and scrupulous care which betrayed his love for the work he was doing.

And yet the uneasiness grew upon him. He felt somehow as though Paolo were present in the room with him, watching him over his shoulder, suggesting improvements to be made, in that voice of his which now rang distinctly in the artist's ear. His imagination worked morbidly, and he thought of Paolo standing beside him, ordering him to do this or that against his will, until he began to doubt his own judgment in regard to what he was doing. He wondered whether he should feel the same thing when Paolo was dead. Again he looked behind him, and the idea that he was not alone gained force. Nevertheless the room was bright, brighter indeed in the afternoon than it ever was in the morning, for the window was towards the south, and though the first rays of the sun reached it at about eleven in the morning, the buildings afterwards darkened it again until the sun was in the west. Moreover to-day, the weather had been changeable, and it had rained a little about noon. Now the air was again clear, and the workshop was lit up so that the light

penetrated even to the ancient cobwebs in the corners, and touched the wax models and casts on the shelves, and gilded the old wood of the door opposite with rich brown gold. Marzio had a curtain of dusty grey linen which he drew across the lower part of the window to keep the sunshine off his work.

He was impatient with himself, and annoyed by the persistency of the impression that Paolo was in some way present in the place. As though to escape from it by braving it he set himself resolutely to consider the expediency of destroying his brother. The first quick impulse in the morning had developed to a purpose in the afternoon. He had constructed the probable occurrences out of the materials of his imagination, and had done it so vividly as to frighten himself. The fright had in some measure cooled his intention, and had been now replaced by a new element in his thoughts, by the apprehension for the future if the deed were accomplished. He began to speculate upon what would happen afterwards, wondering whether by any means the murder could be discovered, and if in that case it could ever be traced to him.

At the first faint suggestion that such a thing as he was devising could possibly have another issue than he had supposed, Marzio felt a cold sensation in his heart, and his thoughts took a different direc-

tion. It was all simple enough. To get Paolo into the workshop alone—a blow—the concealment of the dead body until night—then the short three hundred yards with the hand-cart—it seemed very practicable. Yes, but if by any chance he should meet a policeman under those low trees in the Piazza de' Branca, what would happen? A man with a hand-cart, and with something shapeless upon the hand-cart, in the dark, hurrying towards the river—such a man would excite the suspicions of a policeman. Marzio might be stopped and asked what he was taking away. He would answer—what would he answer in such a case? The hand-cart would be examined and found to contain a dead priest. Besides, he reflected that the wheels would make a terrible clatter in the silent streets at night. Of course he might go out and walk down to the river first and see if there was anybody in the way, but even then he could not be sure of finding no one when he returned with his burden.

But there was the cellar, after all. He could go down in the night and bury his brother's body there. No one ever went down, not even he himself. Who would suspect the place? It would be a ghastly job, the chiseller thought. He fancied how it would be in the cold, damp vault with a lantern—the white face of the murdered man. No, he shrank from thinking of it. It was too horrible to be thought of

until it should be absolutely necessary. But the place was a good one.

And then when Paolo was buried deep under the damp stones, who would be the first one to ask for him? For two or three days no one would be much surprised if he did not come to the house. Marzio would say that he had met him in the street, and that Paolo had excused himself for not coming, on the ground of extreme pressure of work. But the Cardinal, whom he served as secretary, would ask for the missing man. He would be the first. The Cardinal would be told that Paolo had not slept at home, in his lodging high up in the old palace, and he would send at once to Marzio's house to know where his secretary was. Well, he might send, Marzio would answer that he did not know, and the matter would end there.

It would be hard to sit calmly at the bench all day with Gianbattista at his side. He would probably look very often at the iron-bound box. Gianbattista would notice that, and in time he would grow curious, and perhaps explore the cellar. It would be a miserable ending to such a drama to betray himself by his own weakness after it was all done, and Paolo was gone for ever—a termination unworthy of Marzio, the strong-minded freethinker. To kill a priest, and then be as nervous and conscious as a boy in a scrape! The chiseller tried to laugh

aloud in his old way, but the effort was ineffectual, and ended in a painful twisting of the lips, accompanied by a glance at the corner. It would not do; he was weak, and was forced to submit to the humiliation of acknowledging the fact to himself. With a bitter scorn of his incapacity, he began to wonder whether he could ever get so far as to kill Paolo in the first instance. He foresaw that if he did kill him, he could never get rid of him afterwards.

Where do people go when they die? The question rose suddenly in the mind of the unbeliever, and seemed to demand an answer. He had answered often enough over a pint of wine at the inn, with Gasparo Carnesecchi the lawyer and the rest of his friends. Nowhere. That was the answer, clear enough. When a man dies he goes to the ground, as a slaughtered ox to the butcher's stall, or a dead horse to the knacker's. That is the end of him, and it is of no use asking any more questions. You might as well ask what becomes of the pins that are lost by myriads of millions, to the weight of many tons in a year. You might as well inquire what becomes of anything that is old, or worn out, or broken. A man is like anything else, an agglomeration of matter, capable of a few more tricks than a monkey, and capable of a few less than a priest. He dies, and is swallowed up by the earth and gives no more trouble. These were the

answers Marzio was accustomed to give to the question, "Where do people go to when they die?" Hitherto they had satisfied him, as they appear to satisfy a very small minority of idiots.

But what would become of Paolo when Marzio had killed him? Well, in time his body would become earth, that was all. There was something else, however. Marzio was conscious to certainty that Paolo would in some way or other be at his elbow ever afterwards, just as he seemed to feel his presence this afternoon in the workshop. What sort of presence would it be? Marzio could not tell, but he knew he should feel it. It did not matter whether it were real to others or not, it would be too real to him. He could never get rid of the sensation; it would haunt him and oppress him for the rest of his life, and he should have no peace.

How could it be, if it were not a real thing? Even the priests said that the spirits of dead men did not come back to earth; how much more impossible must it be in Marzio's view, since he denied that man had a soul. It would then only be the effect of his imagination recalling constantly the past deed, and a thing which only existed in imagination did not exist at all. If it did not exist, it could not be feared by a sensible man. Consequently there was nothing to fear.

The conclusion contradicted the given facts from

which he had argued, and the chiseller was puzzled. For the first time his method of reasoning did not satisfy him, and he tried to find out the cause. Was it, he asked himself, because there lingered in his mind some early tradition of the wickedness of doing murder? Since there was no soul, there was no absolute right and wrong, and everything must be decided by the standard of expediency. It was a mistake to allow people to murder each other openly, of course, because people of less intellectual capacity would take upon themselves to judge such cases in their own way. But provided that public morality, the darling of the real freethinker, were not scandalised, there would be no inherent wrong in doing away with Paolo. On the contrary, his death would be a benefit to the community at large, and an advantage to Marzio in particular. Not a pecuniary advantage either, for in Marzio's strange system there would have been an immorality in murdering Paolo for his money if he had ever had any, though it seemed right enough to kill him for an idea. That is, to a great extent, the code of those persons who believe in nothing but what they call great ideas. The individuals who murdered the Czar would doubtless have scrupled to rob a gentleman in the street of ten francs. The same reason developed itself in Marzio's brain. If his brother had been rich, it would have been a crime to murder him for his

wealth. It was no crime to murder him for an idea. Marzio said to himself that to get rid of Paolo would be to emancipate himself and his family from the rule and interference of a priest, and that such a proceeding was only the illustration on a small scale of what he desired for his country; consequently it was just, and therefore it ought to be done.

Unfortunately for his logic, the continuity of his deductions was blocked by a consideration which he had not anticipated. That consideration could only be described as fear for the future, and it had been forcibly thrust upon him by the fright he had received while he was examining the hole in the floor. In order to neutralise it, Marzio had tried the experiment of braving what he considered to be a momentary terror by obstinately studying the details of the plan he intended to execute. To his surprise he found that he returned to the same conclusion as before. He came back to that unaccountable fear of the future as surely as a body thrown upwards falls again to the earth. He went over it all in his mind again, twice, three times, twenty times. As often as he reached the stage at which he imagined Paolo dead, hidden, and buried in a cellar, the same shiver passed through him as he glanced involuntarily behind him. Why? What power could a dead body possibly exercise over a living man in the full possession of his senses?

Here was something which Marzio could not understand, but of which he was made aware by his own feelings. The difficulty only increased in magnitude as he faced it, considered it, and tried to view it from all its horrible aspects. But he could not overcome it. He might laugh at the existence of the soul and jest about the future state after death; he could not escape from the future in this life if he did the deed he contemplated. He should see the dead man's face by day and night as long as he lived.

This forced conclusion was in logical accordance with his original nature and developed character, for it was the result of that economical, cautious disposition which foresees the consequences of action and guides itself accordingly. Even in the moment when he had nearly killed Paolo that morning he had not been free from this tendency. In the instant when he had raised the tool to strike he had thought of the means of disposing of the body and of hindering suspicion. The panorama of coming circumstances had presented itself to his mind with the rapidity of a flash of lightning, but in that infinitesimal duration of time Paolo had turned round, and the opportunity was gone. His mind had worked quickly, but it had not gone to the end of its reasoning. Now in the solitude of his studio he had found leisure to follow out the results to the last link

of the chain. He saw clearly that even if he eluded discovery after the crime, he could never escape from the horror of his dead brother's presence.

He laid the silver figure of the Christ straight before him upon the leathern pad, and looked intently at it, while his hands played idly with the tools upon the table. His deep-set, heavy eyes gazed fixedly at the wonderful face, with an expression which had not yet been there. There was no longer any smile upon his thin lips, and his dark emaciated features were restful and quiet, almost solemn in their repose.

"I am glad I did not do it," he said aloud after some minutes.

Still he gazed at his work, and the impression stole over him that but for a slight thing he might yet have killed his brother. If he had left the figure more securely propped upon the pad, it could not have slipped upon the bench; it could not have made that small distinct sound just as he was examining the place which was to have been his brother's grave; he would not have been suddenly frightened; he would not have gone over the matter in his mind as he had done, from the point of view of a future fear; he would have waited anxiously for another opportunity, and when it presented itself he would have struck the blow, and Paolo would have

been dead, if not to-day, to-morrow. There would have been a search which might or might not have resulted in the discovery of the body. Then there would have been the heartrending grief of his wife, of Lucia, and the black suspicious looks of Gianbattista. The young man had heard him express a wish that Paolo might disappear. His home would have been a hell, instead of being emancipated from tyranny as he had at first imagined. Discovery and conviction would have come at last, the galleys for life for himself, dishonour and contempt for his family.

He remembered Paolo's words as he stood contemplating the crucifix just before that moment which had nearly been his last. *Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem*—"Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven." In a strange revulsion of feeling Marzio applied the words to himself, with an odd simplicity that was at once pathetic and startling.

"If Christ had not died," he said to himself, "I should not have made this crucifix. If I had not made it, it would not have frightened me. I should have killed my brother. It has saved me. 'For us men and for our salvation'—those are the words—for my salvation, it is very strange. Poor Paolo! If he knew to what he owed his life he would be pleased. Who can believe such things? Who

would have believed this if I had told it? And yet it is true."

For some minutes still he gazed at the figure. Then he shook himself as though to rouse his mind from a trance, and took up his tools. He did not glance behind him again, and, for the time at least, his nervous dislike of the box in the corner seemed to have ceased. He laboured with patient care, touching and re-touching, believing that each tap of the hammer should be the last, and yet not wholly satisfied.

The light waned, and he took down the curtain to admit the last glows of the evening. He could do no more, art itself could have done no more to beautify and perfect the masterpiece that lay upon the cushion before him. The many hours he had spent in putting the last finish upon the work had produced their result. His hand had imparted something to the features of the dying head which had not been there before, and as he stood over the bench he knew that he had surpassed his greatest work. He went and fetched the black cross from the shelf, and polished its smooth surface carefully with a piece of silk. Then he took the figure tenderly in his hands and laid it in its position. The small screws turned evenly in the threads, fitting closely into their well-concealed places, and the work was finished. Marzio placed the whole crucifix upon the bench and sat down to look at it.

It made a strong impression upon him, this thing of his own hands, and again he remained a long time resting his chin upon his folded fingers and gazing up at the drooping lids. The shadows lay softly on the modelled silver, so softly that the metal itself seemed to tremble and move, and in his reverie Marzio could almost have expected the divine eyes to open and look into his face. And gradually the shadows deepened more and more, and gathered into gloom till in the dark the black arms of the cross scarcely stood out from the darkness, and in the last lingering twilight he could see the clear outline of the white head and outstretched hands, that seemed to emit a soft radiance gathered from the brightness of the departed day.

Marzio struck a match and lit his lamp. His thoughts were so wholly absorbed that he had not remembered the workmen, nor wondered why they had not come back. After all, most of them lived in the direction of the church, and if they had finished their work late they would very probably go home without returning to the shop. The chiseller wrapped the crucifix in the old white cloth, and laid it in its plain wooden box, but he did not screw the cover down, merely putting it on loosely so that it could be removed in a moment. He laid his tools in order, mechanically, as he did every evening, and then he extinguished the light and

made his way to the door, carrying the box under his arm.

The boy who alone had remained at work had lighted a tallow candle, and was sitting dangling his heels from his stool as Marzio came out.

"Still here!" exclaimed the artist.

"Eh! You did not tell me to go," answered the lad.

Marzio locked the heavy outer door and crossed over to his house, while the boy went whistling down the street in the dusk. Slowly the artist mounted the stairs, pondering, as he went, on the many emotions of the day, and at last repeating his conclusion, that he was glad that he had not killed Paolo.

By a change of feeling which he did not wholly realise, he felt for the first time in many years that he would be glad to see his brother alive and well. He had that day so often fancied him dead, lying on the floor of the workshop, or buried in a dark corner of the cellar, that the idea of meeting him, calm and well as ever, had something refreshing in it. It was like the waking from a hideous dream of evil to find that the harm is still undone, to experience that sense of unutterable relief which every one knows when the dawn touches the outlines of familiar objects in the room, and dispels in an instant the visions of the night.

Paolo might not come that evening, but at least Maria Luisa and Lucia would speak of him, and it would be a comfort to hear his name spoken aloud. Marzio's step quickened with the thought, and in another moment he was at the door. To his surprise it was opened before he could ring, and old Assunta came forward with her wrinkled fingers raised to her lips.

"Hist! hist!" she whispered. "It goes a little better—or at least——"

"What? Who?" asked Marzio, instinctively whispering also.

"Eh! You have not heard? Don Paolo—they have killed him!"

"Paolo!" exclaimed Marzio, staggering and leaning against the door-post.

"He is not dead—not dead yet at least," went on the old woman in low, excited tones. "He was in the church with Tista—a ladder——"

Marzio did not stop to hear more, but pushed past Assunta with his burden under his arm, and entered the passage. The door at the end was open, and he saw his wife standing in the bright light in the sitting-room, anxiously looking towards him as though she had heard his coming.

"For God's sake, Gigia," he said, addressing her by her old pet name, "tell me quickly what has happened!"

The Signora Pandolfi explained as well as she could, frequently giving way to her grief in passionate sobs. She was incoherent, but the facts were so simple that Marzio understood them. He was standing by the table, his hand resting upon the wooden case he had brought, and his face was very pale.

"Let me understand," he said at last. "Tista was on the ladder. The ladder slipped, Paolo ran to catch it, and it fell on him. He is badly hurt, but not dead; is that it, Gigia?"

Maria Luisa nodded in the midst of a fit of weeping.

"The surgeon has been, you say? Yes. And where is Paolo lying?"

"In Tista's room," sobbed his wife. "They are with him now."

Marzio stood still and hesitated. He was under the influence of the most violent emotion, and his face betrayed something of what he felt. The idea of Paolo's death had played a tremendous part in his thoughts during the whole day, and he had firmly believed that he had got rid of that idea, and was to realise in meeting his brother that it had all been a dream. The news he now heard filled him with horror. It seemed as if the intense wish for Paolo's death had in some way produced a material result without his knowledge; it was as though he

had killed his brother by a thought—as though he had had a real share in his death.

He could hardly bear to go and see the wounded man, so strong was the impression that gained possession of him. His fancy called up pictures of Paolo lying wounded in bed, and he dreaded to face the sight. He turned away from the table and began to walk up and down the little room. In a corner his foot struck against something—the drawing board on which he had begun to sketch the night before. Marzio took it up and brought it to the light. Maria Luisa stared at him sorrowfully, as though reproaching him with indifference in the general calamity. But Marzio looked intently at the drawing. It was only a sketch, but it was very beautifully done. He saw that his ideal was still the same, and that upon the piece of paper he had only reproduced the features he had chiselled ten years ago, with an added beauty of expression, with just those additions which to-day he had made upon the original. The moment he was sure of the fact he laid aside the board and opened the wooden case.

Maria Luisa, who was very far from guessing what an intimate connection existed between the crucifix and Paolo in her husband's mind, looked on with increasing astonishment as he took out the beautiful object and set it upon the table in the light.

But when she saw it her admiration overcame her sorrow for one moment.

"*Dio mio!* What a miracle!" she exclaimed.

"A miracle?" repeated her husband, with a strange expression. "Who knows? Perhaps!"

At that moment Gianbattista and Lucia entered through the open door, and stood together watching the scene without understanding what was passing. The young girl recognised the crucifix at once. She supposed that her father did not realise Paolo's condition, and was merely showing the masterpiece to her mother.

"That is the one I saw," she whispered to Gianbattista. The young man said nothing, but fixed his eyes upon the cross.

"Papa," said Lucia timidly, "do you know?"

"Yes. Is he alone?" asked Marzio in a tone which was not like his own.

"There is Assunta," answered the young girl.

"I will go to him," said the artist, and without further words he lifted the crucifix from the table and went out. His face was very grave, and his features had something in them that none of the three had seen before—something almost of grandeur. Gianbattista and Lucia followed him.

"I will be alone with him," said Marzio, looking back at the pair as he reached the door of the sick chamber. He entered, and a moment afterwards

old Assunta came out and shuffled away, holding her apron to her eyes.

Marzio went in. There was a small shaded lamp on the deal table, which illuminated the room with a soft light. Marzio felt that he could not trust himself at first to look at his brother's face. He set the crucifix upon the old chest of drawers, and put the lamp near it. Then he remained standing before it with his back to the bed, and his hands in the pockets of his blouse. He could hear the regular breathing which told that Paolo was still alive. For a long time he could not turn round; it was as though an unseen power held him motionless in his position. He looked at the crucifix.

"If he wakes," he thought, "he will see it. It will comfort him if he is going to die!"

With his back still turned towards the bed, he moved to one side, until he thought that Paolo could see what he had brought, if consciousness returned. Very slowly, as though fearing some horrible sight, he changed his position and looked timidly in the direction of the sick man. At last he saw the pale upturned face, and was amazed that such an accident should have produced so little change in the features. He came and stood beside the bed.

Paolo had not moved since the surgeon had left; he was lying on his back, propped up by pillows so that his face was towards the light. He was pale

now, for the flush that had been in his cheeks had subsided; his eyelids, which had been half open, had dropped and closed, so that he seemed to be sleeping peacefully, ready to wake at the slightest sound.

Marzio stood and looked at him. This was the man he had hated through so many years of boyhood and manhood—the man who had faced him and opposed him at every step—who had stood up boldly before him in his own house to defend what he believed to be right. This was Paolo, whom he had nearly killed that morning. Marzio's right hand felt the iron tool in the pocket of his blouse, and his fingers trembled as he touched it, while his long arms twitched nervously from the shoulder to the elbow. He took it out, looked at it, and at the sick man's face. He asked himself whether he could think of using it as he had meant to, and then he let it fall upon the bit of green drugget by the bedside.

That was Paolo—it would not need any sharpened weapon to kill him now. A little pressure on the throat, a pillow held over his face for a few moments, and it would all be over. And what for? To be pursued for ever by that same white face? No. It was not worth while, it had never been worth while, even were that all. But there was something else to be considered. Paolo might now die of his accident, in his bed. There would be no

murder done in that case, no haunting horror of a presence, no discovery to be feared, since there would have been no evil. Let him die, if he was dying!

But that was not all either. What would it be when Paolo should be dead? Well, he had his ideas, of course. They were mistaken ideas. Were they? Perhaps, who could tell? But he was not a bad man, this Paolo. He had never tried to wring money out of Marzio, as some people did. On the contrary, Marzio still felt a sense of humiliation when he thought how much he owed to the kindness of this man, his brother, lying here injured to death, and powerless to help himself or to save himself. Powerless? yes—utterly so. How easy it would be, after all, to press a pillow on the unconscious face. There would probably not even be a struggle. Who should save him, or who could know of it? And yet Marzio did not want to do it, as he had wished to a few hours ago. As he looked down on the pale head he realised that he did not want Paolo to die. Standing on the sharp edge of the precipice where life ends and breaks off, close upon the unfathomable depths of eternity, himself firmly standing and fearing no fall, but seeing his brother slipping over the brink, he would put out his hand to save him, to draw him back. He would not have Paolo die.

He gazed upon the calm features, and he knew that he feared lest they should be still for ever. The breath came more softly, more and more faintly, Marzio thought. He bent down low and tried to feel the warm air as it issued from the lips. His fears grew to terror as the life seemed to ebb away from the white face. In the agony of his apprehension, Marzio inadvertently laid his hand upon the injured shoulder, unconsciously pressing his weight upon the place.

With a faint sigh the priest's eyes opened and seemed to gaze for a moment on the crucifix standing in the bright light of the lamp. An expression of wonderful gentleness and calm overspread the refined features.

"*Qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelis.*"

The words came faintly from the dying man's lips, the last syllables scarcely audible in the intense stillness. A deathly pallor crept quickly over the smooth forehead and thin cheeks. Marzio looked for one instant more, and then with a loud cry fell upon his knees by the bedside, his long arms extended across his brother's body. The strong hot tears fell upon the bed coverings, and his breast heaved with passionate sobbing.

He did not see that Paolo opened his eyes at the sound. He did not notice the rush of feet in the

passage without, as Maria Luisa and Lucia and Gianbattista ran to the door, followed by old Assunta holding up her apron to her eyes.

"Courage, Sor Marzio," said Gianbattista, drawing the artist back from the bed. "You will disturb him. Do you not see that he is conscious at last?"

Lucia was arranging the pillows under Paolo's head, and Maria Luisa was crying with joy. Marzio sprang to his feet and stared as though he could not believe what he saw. Paolo turned his head and looked kindly at his brother.

"Courage, Marzio," he said, "I have been asleep, I believe—what has happened to me? Why are you all crying?"

Marzio's tears broke out again, mingled with incoherent words of joy. In his sudden happiness he clasped the two persons nearest to him, and hugged them and kissed them. These two chanced to be Lucia and Gianbattista. Paolo smiled, but the effort of speaking had tired him.

"Well," said Marzio at last, with a kinder smile than had been on his face for many a day—"very well, children. For Paolo's sake you shall have your own way."

Half an hour later the surgeon made his visit and assured them all that there was no serious injury, nor any further danger to be feared. The patient

had been very badly stunned, that was all. Marzio remained by his brother's side.

"You see, Tista," said Lucia when they were in the sitting-room, "I was quite right about the crucifix and the rest."

"Of course," assented the Signora Pandolfi, though she did not understand the allusion in the least. "Of course you are all of you right. But what a day this has been, *cari miei!* What a day! Dear, dear!" She spread out her fat hands upon her knees, looking the picture of solid contentment.

THE END

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